

2013 Golden Jubilee edition

BIHAR YOGA®

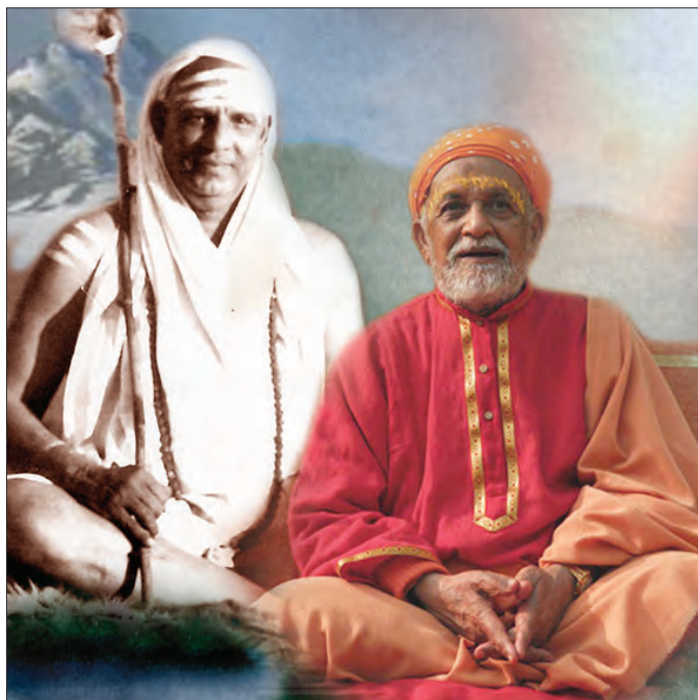
CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCIENCE OF YOGA

Hatha Yoga Book 1

AN OVERVIEW

*From the teachings of
two great luminaries of the 20th century,*

Sri Swami Sivananda Saraswati
Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

Hatha Yoga Book 1

An Overview



1963–2013
GOLDEN JUBILEE

WORLD YOGA CONVENTION 2013
GANGA DARSHAN, MUNGER, BIHAR, INDIA
23rd–27th October 2013

CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCIENCE OF YOGA

Hatha Yoga Book 1

AN OVERVIEW

*From the teachings of
two great luminaries of the 20th century,*

Sri Swami Sivananda Saraswati
Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati

*Including answers from the satsangs of
Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

© Bihar School of Yoga 2012

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, transmitted or stored in a retrieval system, in any form or by any means, without permission in writing from Yoga Publications Trust.

The terms Satyananda Yoga® and Bihar Yoga® are registered trademarks owned by International Yoga Fellowship Movement (IYFM). The use of the same in this book is with permission and should not in any way be taken as affecting the validity of the marks.

Published by Yoga Publications Trust

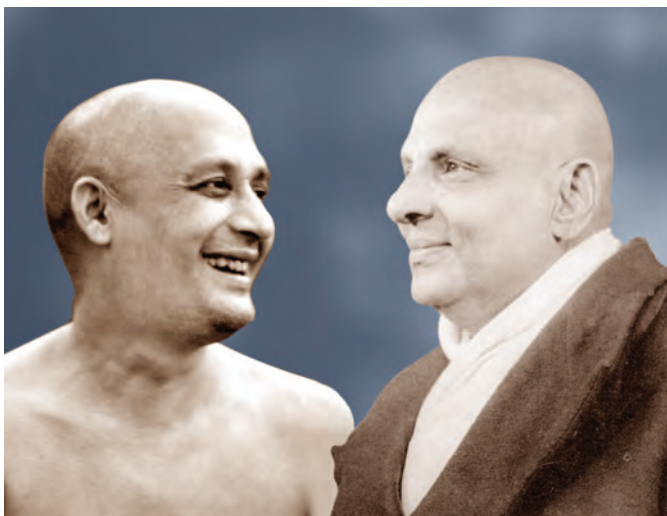
First published 2012

ISBN: 978-93-81620-27-4

Publisher and distributor: Yoga Publications Trust, Ganga Darshan,
Munger, Bihar, India.

Website: www.biharyoga.net
www.rikhiapeeth.net

Printed at Aegean Offset Printers, Greater Noida



Dedication

*In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga
and to our guru Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati
who continues to inspire and guide us
on our spiritual journey.*

Swami Niranjana

Contents

Preface	<i>ix</i>
Introduction	1
1. Understanding Hatha Yoga	7
2. History of Hatha Yoga	36
3. Hatha Yoga in Other Traditions and Cultures	57
4. The Pranamaya Kosha	86
5. Hatha Yoga in Relation to Other Yogas	123
6. The Role of Hatha Yoga in Other Yogas	143
7. Sadhana	171
8. Lifestyle for Sadhana	198
9. The Sadhaka	217
Appendices	
A: Index of Questions	245
B: Index of Scriptural Quotes	257
Glossary	271
General Index	291

Preface

CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCIENCE OF YOGA

Conversations on the Science of Yoga is an encyclopaedic series which brings together the collected teachings of two generations of masters – Swami Sivananda Saraswati of Rishikesh, Swami Satyananda Saraswati of Munger. Satsangs given by Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati on his numerous national and international tours also provide the answers to many questions on this vast subject. These luminaries represent a living tradition in which the eternal knowledge and wisdom of yoga has been passed from guru to disciple in a dynamic continuum from the early twentieth century to the first decades of the twenty-first century.

The series consists of sets of books which present the vast, timeless culture of yoga topic by topic, in question and answer format. In this way, complex and profound subjects such as karma yoga, hatha yoga and bhakti yoga, are presented in clear, simple language. These conversations on yoga reflect an ancient and enduring approach to the transmission of wisdom, in which spiritual aspirants seek answers to their questions at the feet of the guru.

Many of the answers also include verses from the various relevant scriptures, connecting the modern experience with the classical tradition. It is through the lives and teachings of the masters that the scriptures are correctly and intuitively

interpreted for each generation, ensuring that the light of these revelations continues to illumine and inspire the hearts and minds of all who aspire for spiritual upliftment.

Conversations on the Science of Yoga has been compiled from the rich archive of satsangs and writings, both published and unpublished, which is held at the Bihar School of Yoga, Munger. The organization of this material into the major branches of yoga and related topics creates a unique interpretation of the classical yogic sciences for the benefit of humanity in the modern era. Deeply founded in tradition, the teachings are both systematic and practical, addressing the needs of individuals and society at a time when adjustment to constant change is placing unprecedented pressure on people all over the world.

The Bihar Yoga tradition

Bihar School of Yoga is ideally placed to produce this major contribution to yogic literature. Founded in 1963 by Swami Satyananda Saraswati, the system known in India as Bihar Yoga and internationally as Satyananda Yoga, seamlessly integrates all facets of the yogic tradition, including the various branches of yoga, the philosophies which are fundamental to the yogic culture and the dynamism of self-

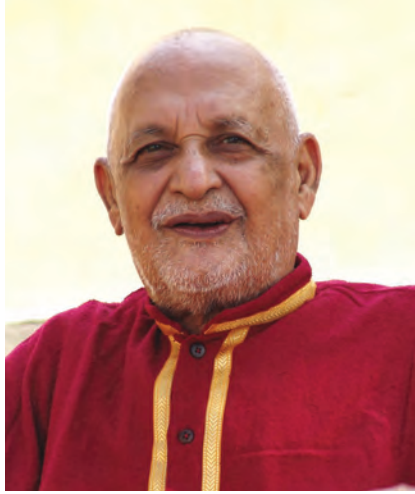


realized preceptors which ensures that the teachings remain fresh and relevant in any age. This all-inclusive approach means that yogic practices are available as tools for holistic life management, while other *vidyas*, spiritual sciences, such as Tantra, Vedanta and Samkhya provide a broad philosophical base. Emerging from this living tradition, *Conversations on the Science of Yoga* is a unique and precious offering to humanity.



Swami Sivananda Saraswati (1887–1963)

Swami Sivananda was a towering spiritual force in the yogic renaissance which developed in India in the first half of the twentieth century. After serving as a doctor in Malaya, he returned to India to pursue his spiritual aspirations, and in 1924 was initiated into Dashnami sannyasa in Rishikesh. He founded the Divine Life Society, toured India extensively, wrote hundreds of books and inspired thousands around the world to practise yoga and lead a divine life. Swami Sivananda's eightfold path of yoga – serve, love, give, purify, do good, be good, meditate, realize – expresses his philosophy of service to humanity and continues to guide the work of the Bihar School of Yoga.



Swami Satyananda Saraswati (1923–2009)

Swami Satyananda was initiated into Dashnami sannyasa by his guru Swami Sivananda, in 1947. After serving his guru's mission in Rishikesh for twelve years, he founded the International Yoga Fellowship in 1956 and the Bihar School of Yoga in 1963. From that base he took the teachings to the rest of the world, fulfilling the mandate of his guru to 'spread yoga from door to door and shore to shore.'

Through his genius and compassion, many ancient, complex and esoteric practices were systematized, simplified and made available to people of all ages, cultures and creeds. Swami Satyananda's blend of charisma and pragmatism attracted multitudes of devotees wherever he went, giving rise to a global movement and creating a far-reaching network of ashrams, yoga centres and teachers. Meanwhile, the headquarters in Bihar continued to expand its many programs, including the publishing division, producing numerous books that both preserve and disseminate the incredibly rich seam of practical wisdom which flows through this lineage.

In 1988 Swami Satyananda renounced his mission in order to live as a paramahansa sannyasin, performing higher

spiritual and vedic sadhanas in an isolated location. During this chapter of his life, he also realized his guru's teaching of 'serve, love, give', by establishing Sivananda Math, an organization dedicated to raising the living standards of the weaker and underprivileged sectors of society.

At midnight on 5 December 2009, Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati attained mahasamadhi.



Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati (1960)

A yogi from earliest childhood, Swami Niranjanananda joined the Bihar School of Yoga in 1964 and was initiated into Dashnami sannyasa in 1971. At the age of eleven he was sent to live abroad by his guru Swami Satyananda, giving him direct experience and understanding of people from a vast array of cultures and walks of life. These years instilled in him a rare, cross-cultural insight into human nature, enabling him to communicate and interact with the international community with familiarity, ease and humour.

Combined with his depth of spiritual and yogic knowledge, this background equipped Swami Niranjanananda to guide the Bihar School of Yoga and the international yoga movement from 1983 until 2008, when he began handing

over the administration to the next generation. During this time he also authored many classic books on yoga, tantra and the upanishads and founded Bihar Yoga Bharati, the world's first yoga university, while continuing extensive national and international touring.

Following retirement from his role at the Bihar School of Yoga, Swami Niranjanananda established Sannyasa Peeth for the development and training of sannyasins, and for his own pursuit of the higher sadhanas of sannyasa.

As the spiritual successor to Swami Satyananda, Swami Niranjanananda continues to inspire aspirants around the world.



Yoga is not a philosophy, it is a practical science. Philosophy gives you knowledge, yoga gives you experience. This is the beauty of yoga. That experience is a manifestation of your inner being.

—Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Introduction

God and nature created this human body with all of its possibilities and hopes. There are various systems and practices of yoga to help man fulfil his human potential, but of these, the most important is hatha yoga.

—*Sivami Satyananda Saraswati*

Hatha yoga is both the most widely practised and the most widely misunderstood branch of yoga in today's world. Its impact has been so great but also so flawed, that many people's perception of yoga is totally limited to a small selection of practices from the hatha yoga tradition, for it is this branch of yoga which includes the *asanas*, or yoga postures. In the popular mind, yoga and asana have become synonymous. This view not only devalues hatha yoga, which is a system of great variety and depth, but also yoga itself, which is a spiritual concept and culture for the expansion of consciousness beyond the conditioned self.

The majority of people who claim to practise hatha yoga are attending classes in which asanas are taught as physical techniques purely for the flexibility and fitness of the body. They are unlikely to have any knowledge or understanding of prana or the nadis, which are the basis of the science of hatha yoga, let alone the wealth of practices other than asana which are integral to hatha yoga. Needless to say, such practitioners

have no idea of the actual purpose of this important branch of yoga.

Due to the appeal of this over-simplified approach, it has become common for teachers to develop and market their own ‘brands’ of yoga in which they adapt and modify the practices for their own purposes, even though they have no direct experience of the pranic body or the effects of the practices on the pranic body. Such effects are fundamental to the techniques of hatha yoga – hence a careful, systematic approach is always advocated by the classical tradition.

The popularity of hatha yoga, however, shows that people around the world are receptive and responsive to the idea of yoga, which until the twentieth century was little known outside India. The uptake and influence of hatha yoga also confirms the advice of great yogis past and present, that it should be the starting point of the yogic journey, laying the foundation for other branches of yoga as the practitioner evolves towards transcendence of the mundane mind. For these reasons alone there is a great need for the dissemination of correct information about this valuable yogic science.

Self-realized masters

In contrast to the modern trend, in the past the practices were maintained and developed by self-realized masters whose understanding of the hatha yoga system came from profound and transcendental experience of the practices, and who only passed on the training to trusted and dedicated disciples. The practices and sadhanas were regarded as ‘secret’ due to their power and specific purpose. In the words of Swami Satyananda, “the real purpose of hatha yoga is not to build the body or improve health, but to energize and awaken the higher centres responsible for the evolution of human consciousness. If hatha yoga is not used for this purpose, its true objective is lost.”

Fortunately true yogic masters and gurus of authentic traditions do still walk this earth. Due to their efforts

and inspiration the integrity of yoga is not only being maintained but also evolved for application to the diverse needs of modern society and for the benefit of those who are drawn to all that yoga has to offer. *Hatha Yoga Book 1: An Overview*, is the first in a collection that present the comprehensive hatha yoga teachings of three generations from a lineage of such masters – Swami Sivananda Saraswati, Swami Satyananda Saraswati and Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati. Through the medium of these masters, a complete understanding of hatha yoga and a vision for its application in the modern era has been interpreted for yoga aspirants around the world.

These modern masters are also able to correctly interpret the scriptural teachings written by the great hatha yogis of the past who first selected and systematized the practices from the vastness of India's yogic culture. Key amongst these are: *Shiva Samhita*, *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* of Yogi Swatmarama, *Gheranda Samhita* of Sage Gheranda and *Hatharatnavali* of Srinivasa Bhatta Mahayogindra. Slokas from these works are used by Swami Sivananda, Swami Satyananda and Swami Niranjanananda as they answer questions on all possible angles of hatha yoga in this series.

These teachings clearly show that far from being merely a collection of physical postures that enhance health and wellbeing, hatha yoga is a deeply significant *vidya*, or body of spiritual knowledge. As such it is precious beyond mundane comprehension and therefore the task of maintaining and protecting its authenticity and integrity lies properly with realized souls. In the hands of the masters, the system of hatha yoga can evolve and develop in tune with the times without compromising its intrinsic nature and qualities. This is exactly the accomplishment of Bihar School of Yoga.

This series of books on hatha yoga make available the full brilliance, depth and vision that underlie the experience of practitioners and students around the world. Questions are answered not only on the multitude of practices which constitute hatha yoga, but also on every facet of its theory

and application, from the origins, evolution and cross-cultural influences of hatha yoga, to its role in health management and in addressing other pressing social needs.

A spiritual system

Within the plethora of yoga schools and brands that now exist, Satyananda Yoga is rare in its ability to present hatha yoga as but one spoke in the wheel of the various branches of yoga, all of which share the central aim of uplifting human consciousness from the mundane to the transcendental. Hatha yoga is not viewed in isolation but in the company of raja yoga, karma yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga, as well as more specialized systems such as mantra and kundalini yoga. A truly balanced approach to life is possible within this framework as it addresses all the aspects of the personality and the tendencies of individuals. The relationship between hatha yoga and raja yoga is particularly interdependent, with hatha yoga offered as the indispensable preparation for raja yoga, which is a high state of consciousness as well as a branch of yoga. The importance of this connection is one of the topics explored in *Hatha Yoga Book 1: An Overview*.

The perception of hatha yoga as yoga for the body is not only a misrepresentation but has also been responsible for devaluing hatha yoga as a spiritual system. Swami Satyananda points out that those with this attitude are ultimately short-changing themselves, “While the side-effect of creating a harmonious psychophysiological balance is definitely worthwhile fruit, the point is that it is like diving for a pearl, bringing the whole oyster to the surface, opening the shell and then discarding the pearl of perfection for the sake of the lining which is only mother-of-pearl.” Attaining this pearl of perfection depends on knowing and practising hatha yoga as per the tradition, which goes far beyond the practice of asanas. The classical texts on hatha yoga also give instruction on *shatkarmas*, techniques to cleanse the internal body, *pranayama*, using the breath as a medium to influence

the pranas, *mudras*, subtle positions which preserve prana, and *bandhas*, contractions or locks which concentrate prana in specific centres. To optimize the effect of the practices, a certain lifestyle is recommended, including the necessity of regular, disciplined sadhana. The guidance of a guru is also regarded as essential.

Having adopted hatha yoga as a part of life, the aspirant can expect far-reaching benefits and effects not only on the physical body but on the energy body and mind. Swami Niranjanananda expresses this succinctly, “Hatha yoga is commonly identified with the practice of asana and pranayama, but it has a deeper purpose than awareness of the body. Hatha yoga involves balancing, managing and directing the energies that control the body and guide the mind.” The contention of hatha yoga is that with the given techniques it is possible to balance the pranic system which governs all the functions of body and mind. Having done this, the mind is automatically managed and higher states arise spontaneously.

Yoga for the modern era

This, says hatha yoga, is easier than attempting control of the mind as the starting point. This pragmatic approach to evolving one’s consciousness is perfectly suited to the current day and age in which people find themselves caught up in mind-disturbing cycles of stress and overstimulation.

Hatha Yoga Book 1: An Overview introduces the vast field of hatha yoga, laying a foundation for understanding the more specific aspects addressed in subsequent books. Readers should be aware that it is not a book of practices, rather it gives a glimpse into the pearl that shines within the hidden heart of the oyster, inspiring yoga practitioners to use their efforts to dive deep for the pearl, rather than settling for the lining of the shell only. In the words of Swami Sivananda, “Hatha yoga is a divine blessing for attaining success in any field. By the practices of hatha yoga a perfect physical body, which is a wholly fit instrument for the mind, can be

achieved. A perfect mind develops, and in samadhi passes into pure consciousness itself. With hatha yoga one can combat diseases of the body and mind and attain radiant health and god-realization. By the practice of hatha yoga, one can become a spiritual hero, full of physical, mental and spiritual strength.”



1

Understanding Hatha Yoga

DEFINITION AND MEANING

Why is hatha yoga important for spiritual aspirants?

Swami Sivananda: Hatha yoga is a divine blessing for attaining success in any field. The body and mind are instruments which the practice of hatha yoga keeps sound, strong and full of energy. It is a unique armour of defence to battle the opposing forces in the material and spiritual fields. The hatha yogi seeks to have a body which is as strong as steel, healthy, free from suffering and therefore, long-lived. The master of the body is the master of both life and death. His lustrous form enjoys the vitality of youth.

By the practices of hatha yoga a perfect physical body, which is a fit instrument for the mind, can be achieved. A perfect mind develops, and in samadhi passes into pure consciousness itself. With hatha yoga one can combat diseases of the body and mind and attain radiant health and god-realization. By the practice of hatha yoga, one can become a spiritual hero, full of physical, mental and spiritual strength.

What is the meaning of the word ‘hatha’?

Swami Sivananda: ‘Ha-tha’ means the union of the sun and the moon, the union of prana and apana. ‘Hatha’ means any tenacious practice, done until the object or end is achieved.

What is the exact meaning of the two letters which constitute *hatha*? These two syllables respectively refer to the solar and lunar energies in the physical body. The lunar energy and the solar energy are also known as mind and prana, yin and yang. In the grosser form of energy they are known as negative and positive poles. And in the realm of the mind, they are known as space and time.

In the individual body they are known as ida nadi and pingala nadi. Ida nadi and pingala nadi are the two different forces flowing within the human system. The purpose of hatha yoga is to bring together these two forces in ajna chakra at the top of the spine.

Does hatha yoga mean physical yoga?

Swami Satyananda: Hatha yoga does not mean physical yoga. Hatha yoga is a system of techniques which bring about a state of harmony between the lunar and solar forces in the physical body. It was called ha-tha yoga in order to make the subject clear. 'Hatha' is a combination of two letters, ha and tha. *Ha* represents the sun and *tha* the moon. This sun and moon are not the external sun and moon. In hatha yoga the sun represents *prana*, the life force, and the moon represents *chitta*, the mind, the mental energy. *Hatha yoga*, therefore, means the union of the pranic and mental forces. This is written in *Hatharatnavali* (1:21):

*Ha kaarenochyate sooryah thakaarashchandrasoochaka;
Chandrasoorye sameebhoote hathayogo'bhidheeyate.*

The letter 'ha' stands for surya (sun) and the letter 'tha' denotes chandra (moon). When chandra and surya are brought into a balanced condition, that is called hatha yoga.

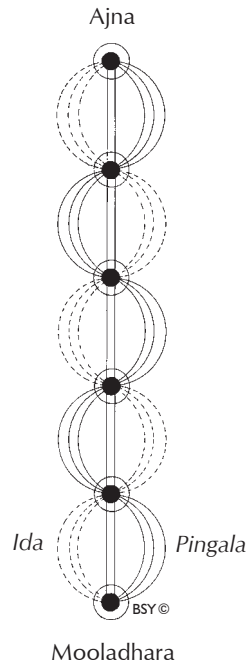
When this union takes place between the pranic and mental forces, a great event occurs in a human being – the awakening of higher consciousness.

What is the correct definition of hatha yoga?

Swami Satyananda: Hatha yoga is not only the union of prana and mind. In fact, it means the union of prana and mind with the Self. This point must be totally clear. In the spine, there are three nadis known as ida, pingala and sushumna. Nadi does not mean nerve. It is not a physical channel. *Nadi* means flow, like the flow of electricity within a cable. In electricity one wire carries the negative force and another, the positive force. Similarly, in hatha yoga *ida nadi* represents the negative force, the flow of consciousness, while *pingala nadi* represents the positive force, the flow of vital energy. *Sushumna nadi* represents the neutral force, the flow of spiritual energy.

The union of these three flows occurs in ajna chakra, so the literal meaning of hatha yoga should be revised. It is generally said that union of ida and pingala is hatha yoga, but actually, the union of ida and pingala with sushumna is hatha yoga. When this union takes place, there is an automatic awakening in mooladhara chakra at the base of the spine. This is the seat of primal energy or *kundalini shakti*. She ascends through sushumna, not through ida and pingala. Sushumna is the highway for kundalini. Kundalini passes through various chakras, sometimes all of a sudden and sometimes very slowly. When it unites with ida and pingala in ajna chakra, that is called hatha yoga. Then, after this first union it forges ahead to sahasrara chakra.

The awakening of kundalini is the subject matter of hatha yoga. Through the practices that are taught in hatha yoga this union is brought about and the awakening of kundalini



takes place as a result. When this awakening occurs the kundalini ascends to higher realms of consciousness and is finally established in sahasrara chakra. There it unites with Supreme Consciousness, Shiva. At that point it is called yoga, not hatha yoga. *Yoga* means ultimate union. Therefore, the ultimate object of hatha yoga is to experience yoga.

However, this force is not active in everyone. In most people this force is dormant. In some people, sometimes there is a momentary activity. Sometimes when there is concentration of mind, activity is seen in this channel. When pranayamas such as bhastrika, kapalbhati and retention of breath are practised, activity may be seen in this channel. When the mind becomes one-pointed, when consciousness of the external world of time, space and object is lost, this channel becomes very active.

What is the traditional meaning of the term ‘hatha yoga’?

Swami Niranjanananda: In the Yoga Upanishads, hatha yoga is described as a means of attaining physical and mental purification and balance. Although hatha yoga is the most commonly known yoga there is a great misconception about its meaning. ‘Hatha’ is generally translated as ‘force’, whereas in the yogic literature the word hatha is a combination of two mantras, *ham* and *tham*, which correspond to pingala and ida nadis respectively. In this context the term hatha yoga means the yoga through which these two forces are balanced. Ida nadi represents the passive aspect of prana which manifests as mental force or chitta shakti. Pingala nadi represents the solar, vital or dynamic force, which manifests in the physical dimension as prana shakti. According to this description hatha yoga is the yoga of channelling the pranas in the body.

What practices are included in hatha yoga?

Swami Niranjanananda: The original practices of hatha yoga were the *shatkarmas*, the group of six purificatory techniques. However, many writers and thinkers have broadened the outlook of hatha yoga by incorporating other aspects to

make it a complete system of yoga in itself. These yogis felt that every type of yoga practice dealing with the purification of the mind, the programming of mental behaviours and attitudes and the awakening of the chakras and kundalini should also be a part of hatha yoga.

PURPOSE OF HATHA YOGA

Why should one practise hatha yoga?

Swami Sivananda: Yoga is a perfectly practical system of self-culture. One attains harmonious development of the body, mind, intellect and soul by practising yoga. It is an exact science. It is the system of yogic exercises used by the Indian rishis and yogis of yore, based on exact principles. It imparts definite, practical knowledge of the means to enjoy fine health, longevity, strength, vim and vitality. Yoga will help one to attain ethical perfection and perfect concentration of the mind, and to unfold various psychic powers. Yoga brings a message of hope to the forlorn, joy to the depressed, strength to the weak and knowledge to the ignorant. Yoga is the secret master key that unlocks the realm of Elysian bliss and deep abiding peace.

The yogi has the ability to laugh heartily and he radiates joy, strength and vigour. He always accomplishes his aims, succeeding in all his attempts. He looks very young even at the age of sixty. He is endowed with a peculiar glow in his face and eyes and possesses a peculiar charm in his smile.

Health is one's birthright, not disease; strength is one's heritage, not weakness; efficiency, not inefficiency; courage, not fear; bliss, not sorrow; peace, not restlessness; knowledge, not ignorance; immortality, not mortality.

Attain good health! Without health, how can one live? Without health, how can one earn? Without health how can one succeed in yoga or any undertaking? Possess wonderful health through the practice of hatha yoga. Attain this birthright or divine heritage and shine as a fully developed yogi radiating joy, peace, bliss and knowledge everywhere.

What is the purpose of hatha yoga in spiritual life?

Swami Satyananda: Originally there were only six techniques in hatha yoga: neti, dhauti, basti, nauli, kapalbhati and trataka. These are the cleansing techniques, known as the shatkarmas. In the course of time the practices of asanas and pranayamas were gradually incorporated. Their purpose is to create complete harmony between the body systems and the brain, the brain and the mind, the mind and the spirit. This provides the preparation necessary for the eventual practice of *raja yoga*, which leads to the states of meditation and samadhi. This is written in *Hatharatnavali* (1:16):

*Peethaani kumbhakaashchitraa divyaani karanaani cha;
Sarvo'pi cha hathaabhyaaso raajayogaphalaarthadah.*

Asanas, various kumbhakas and efficacious mudras, all these practices of hatha result in raja yoga.

Philosophy is intellectual and the end-point of evolution can never be reached through the intellect. The intellect becomes a barrier to spiritual awakening, and a powerful means is needed to transcend it. Hatha yoga is the most effective method for this, as it works on the prana and bypasses the mind. This problem is referred to in *Hatharatnavali* (1:4):

*Bhraantya bahumatadhvaante raajamargamajaanatah;
Kevalam raajayogaaya hathavidyopadishyate.*

Hatha yoga is being expounded only to achieve raja yoga, for those who are ignorant of the great path of raja yoga and are perplexed by the confusions caused by the multiplicity of views.

Why is hatha yoga important?

Swami Nirananjananda: Hatha yoga is the doorway to yoga as it allows one to accept oneself, to move from the physical self into the subtle realms of one's nature. *Bahiranga yoga* is external physical practice and sadhana. Hatha yoga is the gateway to *bahiranga yoga*.

Asanas, pranayamas, mudras and bandhas are the techniques to service this vehicle. If you drive a brand new car without having it serviced, the car will age faster; its life will be reduced by half and accidents will happen. But if the car is serviced regularly, its optimum performance is ensured, and if something goes wrong it can be rectified immediately. Accidents also happen in one's life. A car can be replaced but one's body cannot be changed. People who have had regular servicing have youthful bodies, even in old age. At the age of eighty they are still full of vitality, dynamism and stamina. If one is regular in practising bahiranga yoga, even at the age of eighty, one is like a young person. This can be seen in yogis who, although well advanced in age, follow a systematic routine and discipline.

How can yoga, which is based in the body, help us to know the final truth?

Swami Niranjanananda: This is the same question which Sage Gheranda is asked by Chandakapali at the beginning of the hatha yoga text, *Gheranda Samhita*. Chandakapali was a king. In spite of being a king, he went to Sage Gheranda and asked him the question, how can yoga, which is based in the body, help us to know the final truth? In *Gheranda Samhita* (1:2), King Chandakapali asks the sage his question:

*Ghatasthayogam yogesha tattvajnaanasya kaaranam;
Idaaneem shrotumichchhaami yogeshvara vada prabho.*

O Yogeshwara, god of yoga! I wish to learn ghatastha yoga, which is a means to self-realization. O Yogeshwara! O Lord! Kindly tell me about this.

Actually, four questions are included here. First, what is self-realization? Second, what is ghatastha yoga? Third, how should this yoga be practised? And fourth, is it possible to attain knowledge through yoga?

The first question is, what is self-realization? How can this be understood? *Tattwa* means reality. *Tattwajnana* means

knowledge of that reality or truth which is behind the human body, mind and soul. How can that be understood? This is the first question of all philosophers. What is the aim and purpose of human life?

While one is alive and while prana is inside the body, life can be enjoyed and in the process of enjoying life the consciousness is externalized. Due to this externalized state, the internal life cannot be controlled and balanced. Tattwajnana means knowledge of the final truth, or *atmajnana*, knowledge and realization of the self which is responsible for this body and for this universe. Therefore, attainment of tattwajnana or atmajnana depicts another state of life which not only provides external experience, but gives the experience of balance, control and harmony between external and internal life.

The second question is, what is ghatastha yoga? *Ghata* means mud pot or pitcher. When imagining a pot, a form made out of clay appears on the mental screen. Its external form is seen, but what it contains is unknown. Maybe the pitcher is empty, maybe it is filled with water, maybe it is filled with grain. It can contain anything, but there is only knowledge of its external form. *Ghatastha yoga* is yoga based on the body.

One sees the body, experiences the body and confronts its various diseases. In order to make it happy and contented, *purusharthas* and *karmas*, efforts and actions to attain a goal, are performed. When the body feels cold, one wears clothes. When it feels hot, the clothes are removed and the fan is switched on. When the body needs to rest, one sleeps. All these external activities of the body are experienced, but what are the other elements inside the body? No one knows. What are the different energies inside the body? Why does one perform karmas in one's life? Why does one think? No one knows.

The creation of the body has taken place by a strange coincidence. One may say that coincidence is nature, Brahman or God. What is that energy which has constructed

the body? What is that energy which has awakened other energies inside the body? Such questioning shows that when yogic practices based on the body are begun, they have a direct effect on the mind, calming the mental activities. The effect of physical yoga is felt in the mind. Once mental peace is attained, the karmas and samskaras can be performed harmoniously. It is therefore essential to learn about the subtle as well as the physical or gross elements that are responsible for building the body. When both the physical and subtle elements are understood, it can be said that ghatastha yoga is commencing.

The third question is, how is this yoga to be practised? How a person should go about the yogic practices is the subject of *Gheranda Samhita*.

The fourth question is, what is the result? Is it possible to attain self-realization through yogic practices? Attainment is the result. If yoga is practised, one will definitely benefit from the effects. How much is achieved depends on each person's capacity to prepare for and undertake their sadhana. Only then can the result be known. The rule of nature, however, is that there has to be a result from each karma or action. Waving a hand in the air creates a result, which is secret. If a mosquito lands on the body, a wave of the hand will cause the mosquito to fly away. This is a gross, external result, but the action also has a subtle result, which is the creation of sound. One is unaware of this result. It can be called a subtle effect or secret result that friction is taking place between matter (the hand) and air. A sound is produced, but it is not heard. If the ears were capable of hearing very subtle sounds, then perhaps that sound would be heard. Similarly, with yogic practices, subtle or secret results are created which will be experienced, but may not be noticed or understood with one's current level of wisdom.

Sage Gheranda drew attention to the scientific and critical aspects of yoga by using many metaphors or comparisons, such as calling his system ghatastha yoga.

What is the true spirit of hatha yoga?

Swami Satyananda: Originally, sadhakas practised hatha yoga for many years to prepare for the awakening of kundalini, or in terms of raja yoga, for the experience of samadhi. With the revival of yoga in the twentieth century, however, it seems that the real aim of hatha yoga has been overlooked or even forgotten completely. Today, hatha yoga is generally practised to improve or restore health, reduce stress, prevent the body from ageing, build up the body or beautify it. Hatha yoga has been accepted as a therapeutic science all over the world and many studies are being conducted in this field. Chronic physical and mental illnesses have become epidemic and medical science is not adequately meeting the challenge. Hatha yoga is helping meet this desperate need.

Hatha yoga does fulfil these objectives and this aspect is vitally important. But it should be kept in mind that these objectives are certainly not the goal, and the real purpose of hatha yoga should not be forgotten. Behind every sick man, there is a spiritual man. Behind a diabetic, there is a yogi. Behind a man suffering from depression, there is an aspirant. When a patient comes for help one should teach him yoga and make him better. Of course his sickness should be treated, but one should not stop there. One should take that person further into the spiritual domain of life.

This is the mistake that most yoga teachers have been making. They just teach a patient a few exercises for arthritis, rheumatism or insomnia and that's it. Hatha yoga is not being used to treat the total personality. This is why the teachers are not able to raise the level of their pupils. Improvement of physical health is not enough, mental health must also improve. The personality and nature must change. The mental and psychic frameworks also have to change. One should not merely feel freedom from disease but from bondage and the vagaries of the mind. The time has come that teachers in every part of the world must understand and transmit the true spirit of hatha yoga.

What is the main objective of hatha yoga?

Swami Satyananda: The main objective of hatha yoga is to create an absolute balance in the interacting activities and processes of the physical body, mind and energy. When this balance is created, the impulses generated give an awakening call to the central force, sushumna nadi, which is responsible for the evolution of human consciousness. If hatha yoga is not used for this purpose, its true objective is lost. The awakening of kundalini is the ultimate objective of yoga.

Kundalini is the spiritual force which awakens a different dimension of life within oneself. Hatha yoga is a system which brings about union or harmony between the solar and lunar energies in the physical body. These two energy channels are responsible for physical existence and for all mental actions. In other words, they are the conductors of the mundane energy in man's body and mind. If one wants to awaken the higher energy, the kundalini, there must be a channel for conducting this power to the higher centres of the brain and all over the body.

That channel is already in existence, but it is not in operation. It is known as sushumna and it has to be connected. This connection is the outcome of the union of the solar and lunar energies. The different practices of hatha yoga also have a powerful effect on the *chakras*, or psychic centres, which are located alongside sushumna. The effects of yogasanas and pranayamas are not only physical. There are certain asanas which have an immediate influence on particular energy centres. One must have an open mind to understand these concepts. The practices of hatha yoga must not be underrated.

With the awakening of kundalini, the individual is able to overcome the limitations of body and mind. Sickness, frustration and depression all occur when life is lived in total loneliness. In spite of all the systems of therapy, people continue to be sick. The sickness is external in nature, as people have not understood where life springs from and how

to handle the inner link of shakti. There are three practices, asana, pranayama and meditation, which can solve this situation. With the help of these three, this great task can be accomplished.

Humanity should try to awaken sushumna, the third area of energy. With its awakening, the frontiers of one's limited existence can be transcended. When this third area of energy explodes, time and space will come close and join matter. This is about physics and yoga together. Time, space and matter have to come together if a new evolution is to start in humanity's life.

What role does hatha yoga play in self-realization?

Swami Satyananda: Those people who practise hatha yoga merely as a form of bodily beautification and exercise are not using this science with the correct intention, and therefore they fail to progress to the path of raja yoga. They fail to gain the indwelling pleasure which unified consciousness bestows. The real purpose of hatha yoga is to open the gate to self-realization. A practitioner has to know its subtle influence on the nadis, prana and mind. He should at least know intellectually about shoonya, kundalini, samadhi etc. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:79), it is written:

*Raajayogamajaanantah kevalam hathakarminah;
Etaanabhyaasino manye prayaasaphalavarjitaan.*

There are practitioners of hatha yoga who do not have the knowledge of raja yoga. I consider them as mere practitioners because they derive no fruits for their efforts.

While the side effect of creating a harmonious psycho-physiological balance is definitely worthwhile fruit, the point is that it is like diving for a pearl, bringing the whole oyster to the surface, opening the shell and then discarding the pearl of perfection for the sake of the lining which is only mother-of-pearl.

Certain requisites are necessary for self-realization, without which life is meaningless. The first is *shodhanam*, purification of the body by removing accumulated toxins. The second is *dridhata*, a strong mind, acquired through the practice of *yogasanas*. The third is *sthairyam*, a steady body, which is developed through the practice of *mudras* and *bandhas*. The fourth is *dhairyam*, patience and perseverance, which must be cultivated through the practice of *pratyahara*. The fifth is *laghatvam*, a light body, which is possible through the practice of *pranayama*. The sixth is *pratyaksham*, direct perception of the object of meditation, which develops through *dhyana*. The seventh is *nirliptam*, an unaffected attitude towards all events in life, which is achieved through the practice of *samadhi*.

How does hatha yoga help one achieve wellbeing?

Swami Niranjanananda: Hatha yoga is commonly identified with the practice of *asana* and *pranayama*, but it has a deeper purpose than awareness of the body. Hatha yoga involves balancing, managing and directing the energies that control the body and guide the mind.

When one looks at the body, one does not see any form of energy except muscular vitality or heat. According to yoga, however, there are five bodies existing together: the body of physical matter, the *annamaya kosha*, the body of energy, the *pranamaya kosha*, the body of mind, the *manomaya kosha*, the body of higher intelligence, the *vijñanamaya kosha* and the spiritual body, the *anandamaya kosha*. Hatha yoga specifically aims at releasing the blocked physical, pranic and mental energies, leading to absolute wellbeing of the body.

How does practising asana and pranayama refine and transform one's awareness?

Swami Niranjanananda: The purpose of practising *asana*, *pranayama*, relaxation and meditation in the morning or at night is to re-educate the body, mind and emotions in order to transform the character, behaviours and thinking

patterns. As one continues to do the practices there should be identification with the experiences that are gained. The practitioner should connect with the body, mind and energy. According to yogic principles, different levels of experience and realization take place in the course of yoga practice.

The body is not only composed of matter. Take the example of milk. If butter, curd or cheese is wanted the milk has to be churned to separate the different items. The body and self need to be seen in the same way. The body contains energy and consciousness but they cannot be extracted until one undergoes a process of transforming the basic characteristics of one's nature.

When asanas are practised, there is some form of extraction of awareness, of consciousness. When breathing techniques are practised, there is some form of awareness of the vitality and pranic energy inherent in the body, which becomes more vibrant and dynamic with the practice of pranayama. When relaxation is practised there is connection with the inner nature.

Movement from the physical and material to the mental and psychological, and thence to the spiritual and transcendental, is the aim of yoga. No matter where we start, whether with physical postures or meditation, the aim is to move from physical to spiritual identification.

What are the different concepts of perfection?

Swami Niranjanananda: The aim of yoga, being both individual and universal at the same time, is to provide an experience of perfection. It does not matter how that perfection is expressed. It can be expressed while studying, while serving others, while laughing, crying, sleeping, drinking, enjoying life, denying life. Why not? After all, the entire gamut of our experience must have a meaning behind it. Some people say evolution, some say enlightenment and some say perfection.

So the aim of yoga is to provide an experience of perfection – maybe not the absolute experience, but a

glimpse of perfection. This experience of perfection comes about by following the discipline which is known as yoga. Those who study the *Bhagavad Gita* say that perfection in action is yoga. Those who study the *Yoga Vasishtha* develop a concept that yoga is attaining vairagya, so that one is unaffected by the experiences of the world. Those who study the *Narada Bhakti Sutras* say that yoga is a process by which one can link oneself to God. Those who read other classical texts such as *Gheranda Samhita*, *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, *Shiva Samhita*, *Dattatreya Samhita*, and the *Yoga Upanishads* find that each one is giving a different vision of yoga. They are expressing only one part of the entire system and tradition of yoga. In *Hatharatnavali* (1:86) it says:

*Sampradaayaabdhimathanaajjaayate ratnamaalika;
Suvamakhachitaa chetsyaatko vaa yogee hyupekshate.*

By churning the ocean one can get valuable gems; similarly by churning the ocean of different traditions [of yoga] a valuable golden garland of gems is produced. A yogi will never neglect this.

EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

What effect does hatha yoga have on the body and mind?

Swami Sivananda: By the process of hatha yoga the yogi attains a perfect physical body. *Bala vajrasam-hanana kaya sampat*, “The perfection of the body consists in beauty, grace, strength and adamant hardness.” The power to bear extreme cold and heat, the power to live without water and food and other powers come under the category of *kaya sampat*, perfection of the body.

Since the body of the hatha yogi is perfect and firm, his mind is also firm and one-pointed. By practising dharana and dhyana he reaches the highest rung in the yogic ladder and attains immortality through yogic samadhi. The yogi who has reached the highest stage, will have the eight

major and all the minor siddhis. This is stated in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (3:8):

*Aadinaathoditam divyamashtaishvaryapradaayakam;
Vallabham sarvasiddhaanaam durlabham marutaamapi.*

Adinath said they [mudras and bandhas] are the bestowers of the eight divine powers. They are held in high esteem by all the siddhas and are difficult for even the gods to attain.

I have seen many Vedantins who are in a sickly condition with a very poor physique. A Vedantin is afraid to do asanas and pranayamas on the grounds that their practice will intensify body awareness, and adversely affect the practice of vairagya. Although the two paths of hatha yoga and Vedanta are different, a Vedantin can harmoniously use pranayamas and asanas to great advantage.

The body is closely related to the mind. A weak, sickly body also means a weak mind. This body is a horse to take one to the goal. The body may be inert and useless but it is an important instrument for self-realization. So it must be kept clean, strong and healthy. The Vedantin who practises a little hatha yoga to keep his body and mind healthy and strong is capable of doing very good sadhana and reaching the goal of life quickly.

Does physical weakness limit one's spiritual potential?

Swami Sivananda: Unfortunately, yoga is more or less regarded as a form of physical culture divested of all its psychological and spiritual significance. This is due to an exaggerated emphasis on the yogasanas. Hatha yoga practices do form a preliminary background for progress in yoga, but they are not absolutely indispensable for yoga sadhana. While a strong body is an asset, a weak body is not always a handicap. There are instances in the history of yoga where the ultimate has been achieved while dispensing with the practices of hatha yoga. Nevertheless, I believe that everybody should do asanas regularly. One of the aims of

this yoga movement is to popularize the use and the benefits of asana in the daily life of men, women and children. *Hatharatnavali* (1:22), states:

*Yuvaa bhavati vridhho vaa vyaadhito durbalo'pi vaa;
Abhyaasaatsiddhimaapnoti sarvayogeshvatandritah.*

He who untiringly practises yoga in all its aspects attains success even if he is young, old, diseased or weak.

How does hatha yoga benefit different types of people?

Swami Satyananda: The practices of hatha yoga are beneficial for everyone without exception, whether one is sattvic, rajasic or tamasic. A person who is tamasic by temperament needs hatha yoga to awaken his personality through the body. A person who is rajasic by temperament needs hatha yoga to balance the disturbances in his mind and body. A person who is sattvic by temperament needs hatha yoga to help awaken the kundalini.

In terms of the practices, asanas and pranayamas are universal in their application – they are for everyone. Beyond pranayama, however, the path is individual, according to the temperament, personality and incarnation of the human being.

How does hatha yoga benefit the body and mind?

Swami Satyananda: The practice of hatha yoga lessens and prevents the decay of tissues by increasing the life force and filling the system with abundant energy. By practising hatha yoga the blood is charged with abundant oxygen, the accumulation of venous blood is stopped and the brain and spinal centres are rejuvenated. By practising hatha yoga the mind is strengthened, the memory is improved, the intellect is sharpened and intuition is developed. How can a person who does not know his own body hope to achieve success in yoga? A practitioner should first have a strong, firm and healthy body through the practice of hatha yoga, and then take to raja yoga.

Why should hatha yoga be part of one's spiritual sadhana?

Swami Satyananda: God and nature created this human body with all of its possibilities and hopes. There are various systems and practices of yoga to help man fulfil his human potential, but of these, the most important is hatha yoga. The first exponent of hatha yoga was Lord Shiva. There is no doubt that hatha yoga is a highly evolved system, which is designed to bring about and maintain good physical and mental health. Hatha yoga uses physical postures and breathing practices to create harmony in the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. Asanas are not merely physical exercises, they are postures that should be maintained for a definite period of time.

The practice of hatha yoga should form a part of the sadhana of each and every yogi. Many aspirants have criticized and underrated the practice of hatha yoga saying it is a physical practice that makes one body-minded. They want to focus on their spiritual being and think the practice of hatha yoga is gross. This is the hopeless miscalculation of those unfortunate yoga aspirants.

If hatha yoga is practised earnestly, with a proper teacher, it not only purifies the physical body but at the same time brings about the harmonization of the two great forces: ida and pingala nadis. Hatha yoga is translated as physical yoga exercises, but what a hopeless translation this is!

What is hatha yoga's understanding of the human condition?

Swami Niranjanananda: In the hatha yoga text *Gheranda Samhita* (1:4), Sage Gheranda selects four subjects in order to explain yoga in the context of the human condition:

*Naasti maayaasamah paasho naasti yogaatparam balam;
Naasti jnaanaatparō bandhurnaahankaaraatparō ripuh.*

There is no fetter like delusion and there is no force as powerful as yoga. There is no greater friend than knowledge and no foe worse than ego.

The first topic is delusion and sin. Delusion is identified here as a fetter, a sin, as its existence is temporary, it is false and it is a symbol of ignorance. When one lives in ignorance, one remains under the spell of delusion, and overpowered by it, runs after pleasure and enjoyment. Becoming engrossed in worldly pleasures and forgetting oneself and the meaning of one's existence due to ignorance is considered to be a sin, and its cause is delusion. That is why Sage Gheranda says, *Naasti maayaa samah paasho*, there is no other fetter as wicked as delusion in this universe.

Naasti yogaatparam balam means there is no force as powerful as yoga. Sage Gheranda has visualized yoga in the form of energy through which life's shortcomings can be eradicated, as through its force the whole personality, the body, mind, intellect, thoughts, emotions and behaviour, can be brought under control, moderated and balanced.

Possibly there is no other science in the world which works for the development of the body, mind and consciousness in such an integrated manner. Modern educational systems teach nothing about such a science. Sit-ups, a morning run or a few physical exercises or games in a gymnasium are recommended to develop the body, while classroom education only develops the intellect, not the whole mind. To rid the body of physical ailments many systems of medicine are available, such as allopathy, homeopathy and ayurveda, but these systems regard the body as matter and treat it accordingly. Psychology has developed some methods for the treatment of mental disorders but they are still in the experimental stage. The ideas of modern psychology are only about two hundred years old, with much of the development having taken place since Freud and Jung.

There is no education available today for developing the whole personality. There was a time in India when students were taught methods of developing the personality, but in modern life this system has been lost. Through the medium of yoga, however, thorough development of the personality can be achieved. Physical disorders can be healed by simple

methods, the mind can be developed and wisdom attained by awakening intuition. For this reason Sage Gheranda has said that there is no force greater than yoga in the universe. Through yoga one can develop oneself, not only in relation to the gross world, but also to attain and use subtle inner experiences.

Naasti jnaanaatparō bandhuh means there is no greater friend than knowledge in this world. In the most difficult of situations, knowledge is the only force that can really help. One person may not help another in their utmost difficulty, but knowledge will always help. Knowledge dispels ignorance. All the difficulties that arise in life exist due to ignorance. Yoga does not believe that a person is overcome by difficulties in life due to destiny. Yoga says that if one has *purushartha*, capacity, one can remain happy in all conditions.

Naahahankaaraatparō ripuh means that ego is the root cause of all shortcomings. Everyone likes to think they are blessed with the best qualities and this self-image of being the best and knowing everything tends to be maintained. Not wanting to bow down before anyone is a common tendency in human beings. It is *ahamkara*, ego. The ego becomes the biggest enemy in a person's life. It is an obstacle to friendship and it suppresses the learning process when a person cannot adjust to changing circumstances. The veil of ego in front of their eyes prevents the mind from developing, and they have false pride in their ability. This is why delusion and ego are considered to be a sin and an enemy, while yoga and knowledge are regarded as one's energy and friend in life.

This is the first teaching of Sage Gheranda and forms the basis of the education he offers in yoga: how one can use yogic power through practice, make knowledge one's friend, be free from sin and keep the foe in the form of ego at a distance. The shortcomings in an individual's life can be discovered by contemplating and meditating on these four subjects. In this world, whether in the modern or ancient era,

knowledge, delusion, ego and yoga (the efforts that people make to become prosperous are referred to here as yoga) are important topics.

Knowledge and yoga are seen in the form of a friend and an energy. There are many forms of knowledge. At one time knowledge was mainly external, at another time it meant inner knowledge. In the present era knowledge is accepted as both internal and external. In accordance with the needs of today there should be coordination and realization of both the external and internal experiences of knowledge. Only then can the infinite energy hidden in the personality be experienced and awakened.

Yoga is seen here as an energy or force. Another name for yoga is purushartha, self-effort. When an effort at self-attainment is made, it becomes a form of yoga *sadhana*, yoga practice. Yoga means to unite. Purushartha and sadhana are uniting forces. Purushartha and sadhana are the *shaktis*, the inner powers or energies of human beings.

How does hatha yoga strengthen the subtle inner capacity?

Swami Niranjanananda: What does the body need to be capable of? What is the role of this body? This needs to be understood first. Then one must take one's thinking to the spiritual level and ask how the body can contribute to spiritual development. In *Gheranda Samhita* (1:8) an analogy is used to help explain the effect of yoga on the body:

*Aamakumbha ivaambhastho jeeryamaanah sadaa ghatah;
Yogaanalena sandahya ghatashuddhim samaacharet.*

The body invariably decays like an unbaked earthen pot placed in water; strengthen and purify the body in the fire of yoga.

The body is like a weak, unbaked earthen pot. If an unfired pot is filled with water it will dissolve, but if it is prepared by being baked in fire then it will not dissolve and will become capable of holding water. Through this example

Sage Gheranda explains that if the body is fired in the fire of yoga, then the energy produced in the body will firstly purify it and then develop its capacities. The purity of the body referred to here does not only mean a clean and pure physical body. It means attaining inner purity by purifying the body. *Yogaanalena sandahya ghatashuddhim samaacharet*, the energy produced by yoga practices is called the 'glow' or 'fire of yoga.' Through the medium of this fire disorders are removed from the body, purifying and strengthening it. This is the physical aspect.

By attaining a pure physical state, the mind also becomes pure. Yoga does not believe that the body and mind are two different elements; instead it teaches that the body and mind are very closely related. Disorders in the body create disorders in the mind, and disorders in the mind create disorders in the body. Physical diseases create mental disorders, and mental disorders create physical diseases. Therefore, when the body is purified through yoga practices, a pure state of mind occurs automatically. When the body and mind are under control, when disorders of the body and mind are absent, then one becomes capable of struggle.

Generally, struggle is understood to mean fighting, but here it means the ability to be positive, to stay cool even in adverse situations. Struggle does not mean that if one is unhappy all one's efforts are put into banishing or fighting the unhappiness, as that type of effort only creates more tension. The attainment of this capacity signifies a pure state in the body and mind, without any disorders. In the absence of disorders, the mental capacity is sharp.

When physical and mental purity are attained this affects the inner self, the *antahkarana*. *Ahamkara*, ego, *buddhi*, intellect, and *chitta*, memory, are the three main components of the antahkarana. Therefore, when these states of purity affect the antahkarana, *buddhi*, intellect, also changes. The intellect, which normally runs after sensual pleasures, spontaneously experiences self-control. A person only runs after worldly pleasures when there are defects present within,

such as lust or desire, but when positive qualities are created within, a positive intellect is also created. In a pure state, negative elements do not exist.

In *atma shuddhi*, inner purity, the limiting elements simply cease to exist and the ego is extinguished as control over it is achieved. Sage Gheranda has explained the same inner purity as purity of the ghata, the physical pitcher and its subtle contents. This point is about the significance of yoga.

How does hatha yoga improve physical and mental health?

Swami Niranjanananda: The key to relief from physical, psychological and emotional disorders lies within each individual. Awareness, harmony, mental clarity and inner balance are the principle factors for establishing a state of balance in a person. Yoga techniques, such as asana, pranayama, relaxation, concentration and meditation, help the individual to attain awareness, balance and harmony by influencing the currents of energy that circulate throughout the whole system.

The entire body is a composition of prana and mind. Subtle pranas are responsible for the physical actions and movements in life, while the mind is responsible for thinking and feeling. These are the great twin forces in the human system. If they lose their balance, then a corresponding imbalance is created in the physical and mental behaviour. The practices of hatha yoga and raja yoga are based on these twin forces. Through the practice of asana and pranayama, the energy or pranic force is balanced, and through the practice of concentration, relaxation and meditation, the mind is balanced.

How does bahiranga, external yoga, influence the mind and inner dimension?

Swami Niranjanananda: The physical practices not only affect the physical structure but also the pranic dimension, and harmony between the body and prana influences the mental dimension. The purpose of external yogic sadhana is not

only to provide health or remove imbalances but also to balance the physical energy with the mental energy. Hatha yoga has to be understood not as physical activity, not as the performance of physical postures, but as the realignment of the physical and mental energies. Hatha yoga is attaining balance between the physical and mental pranic forces. The aim of hatha yoga is to balance the physical and mental activity, to harmonize the physical movement of prana and the mental experience of prana.

This is further clarified by Sage Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras* (2:46) when he defines asana: *Sthirasukhamaasanam*, “Asana is that posture in which one is *sthira*, immobile, and *sukham*, comfortable”, where the body is still and in a state of absolute ease. Stillness, comfort and ease is the definition of asana. When asanas are practised, it can be said that there are two kinds, dynamic and static. A shift is made from a dynamic state of practice to a passive state of experience. The dynamic asanas are to loosen up the body and joints, to eliminate stress and tension from the muscular and nervous systems. The static postures help to internalize the mind. One group of asanas helps the physical body and the other group helps internalize the awareness.

The physical activity has to be internalized and quietened, and tranquillity developed. So Sage Patanjali says that asana is that posture in which one is immobile, steady, firm, comfortable and at ease. If this is interpreted from a psychological, emotional or spiritual perspective, his statement indicates that harmony exists between body and mind. External sadhana, therefore, leads to focusing of the physical and mental energies. At this point *bahiranga yoga*, external yoga, stops and *antaranga*, inner yoga, begins.

Why is it important to purify the five elements or tattwas in the body?

Swami Satyananda: This body is composed of five elements or tattwas, it is not composed of blood. It is not only composed of bone, marrow and mucus. It is composed of five elements.

And what are these five elements? Space, air, fire, water and earth. The permutation and combination of the five elements have created this body, have created this universe, have created England, have created India, have created the whole world and matter.

If the five elements in the body are not purified, they interfere with the activities of prana. It is said in hatha yoga that the purification of the physical body does not only mean purifying it of dirt. In the practices of hatha yoga these tattwas, which are responsible for the creation of the body, are purified.

This purification of the body, its five elements, pranas and nadis, is considered a prerequisite for enlightenment. If the body is loaded with toxic elements, if the pranas governing vital physiological functions are disrupted and the autonomic nervous system is in a state of imbalance, if the five elements or the five chakras are not purified, then enlightenment of that body cannot occur. For this purpose, a few particular practices are indicated in hatha yoga, kriya yoga and tantra.

Why is it important to have physical and mental stamina for the spiritual path?

Swami Satyananda: One's entire being is made fit and strong through the practice of hatha yoga. It acts as a shelter from the effects of the pains, which are a part of life. The Sanskrit word *tapas* has two meanings: one is 'to heat' and the other is 'pain'. Pain itself is a type of heat which tempers and heats the mind, emotions and physical body. Pain is of three types: *adhyatmika*, spiritual, *adhidaivika*, natural or environmental, and *adhibhautika*, physical.

As long as a person feels separation from his true identity he will suffer spiritually. *Adhyatmika tapas* is the pain that comes from living without realization of the inner being. This pain is essential as it motivates one to strive for a purer experience. Pain brought about by natural circumstances is also unavoidable. The course of nature always brings about

some climatic or geological imbalance such as floods, drought, winds, earth tremors, or storms, which affect the balance of the body's functions and generally disturb the normal functioning of life. Business is affected, crop growth is affected and so are many other things. Thirdly, there is physical suffering. Nature continually tests the body by an imbalance of bacteria, by accidents, or by mental and emotional shocks.

Therefore, it is essential that the hatha yogi prepares himself, not only physically but also mentally, emotionally and psychically so that he can remain unaffected by these three types of external tempering. *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:10) states:

*Asheshataapataaptaanaam samaashrayamatho hathah;
Asheshayogayuktaanaamaadhaarakamatho hathah.*

For those continually tempered by the heat of tapas (the three types of pain – spiritual, environmental and physical) hatha is like the hermitage giving protection from the heat. For those always united in yoga, hatha is the basis, acting like a tortoise.

The body and mind need to be strengthened so that they remain unaffected by the mundane circumstances of worldly events. In this way the body and mind become like a tortoise, which can extend its limbs when necessary or retreat into the protection of its hard shell when threatened. The limbs are symbolic of the external senses which should be externalized when necessary, but can be internalized at one's command and remain unaffected by the external happenings of the world. The practice of hatha yoga will enable this type of strength and control of the body and mind.

Why is the effect of hatha yoga on the body's energy so important?

Swami Satyananda: Hatha yoga is the most important of all the yogas as it controls the body and the two forms of energy in the body, which are known as life and consciousness, or

life and mind. The body is composed of two forms of energy or *shakti*: one is prana, the life or vital force, and the other is chitta, the conscious or mental force. These two forms of energy control the motor and sensory organs, and they should be balanced. Physical or mental illness result when there is imbalance in these energies. The balance between these two forces is known as hatha yoga. *Ha* means 'life' and *tha* means 'mind'.

In an electric cable there are two wires, positive and negative. When these two wires come together, electricity manifests. The same thing happens in the body. Within the spine there are two energy channels, two nadis. The channel flowing on the left side carries the flow of consciousness and the channel flowing on the right side carries the flow of life. These energies are distributed throughout the body via six distribution centres. Whenever there is a block in the distribution of energy that person becomes sick, either physically or mentally. This is referred to in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (2:17):

*Hikkaa shvaasashcha kaasashcha shirahkarnaakshivedanaah;
Bhavanti vividhaa rogaah pavanasya prakopatah.*

Hiccups, asthma, coughs, headache, ear and eye pain, and various other diseases are due to disturbances of the vital air.

The yoga postures, pranayama and other related practices in hatha yoga remove these energy blocks.

Does hatha yoga transform the physical body at the subtle level?

Swami Satyananda: Humanity has to evolve. If civilization is not structured along evolutionary lines the human race will face disaster, death and absolute extinction. Evolution cannot be denied. Everything in this universe is evolving, even the rocks. If there is metamorphosis in every part of creation, why shouldn't the human body undergo this state

of metamorphosis? Transformation is a scientific fact. It is not a philosophy, faith or creed. It is the path of evolution and it gives meaning to life. This physical body constantly undergoes various processes of transformation which affect each and every molecule of its material substance.

People have begun to realize that matter in its ultimate form is energy. With this understanding it is necessary to reanalyze and redefine what the body is and how far this transformation can be effected. Can the body be turned into light particles? One should think about this in terms of science, not in terms of the faith or belief that one has had until now. If this body can undergo a state of metamorphosis, then what is the way? The answer is hatha yoga. Through the process of hatha yoga the body is rendered so subtle and pure that it is transformed into a yogic body, which is unaffected by old age and disease.

Hatha yoga is practised in order to initiate a process in this physical body whereby the pranic molecules and the mental forces, which interact with each other in the scheme of life and existence, may be transformed. Unless the physical molecules are transformed it is of no use to discuss compassion and unity. A great challenge is open to humanity. If matter in its ultimate form is energy, then this physical body can be transformed through the systematic practice of the six cleansing techniques of hatha yoga: neti, dhauti, basti, nauli, kapalbhati, and trataka. After this, asana, pranayama, mudra and bandha should be practised.

Do the hatha yoga practices transform the personality as well as the body?

Swami Niranjanananda: If one takes up yogasanas for whatever reason, whether it is physical, mental or spiritual, a system must be followed. This allows the development of a harmonious and well-balanced physiological and psychological structure. If yoga is taken up for physical problems, there is no doubt that it will help, but that is not all it will do. At the same time as healing the body, it will

definitely influence the various facets of personality such as the mind, emotions, behaviour and feelings.

Asanas can never be described as affecting only the physical body. Their influence is far-reaching and not just confined to the physiological structure. Pranayamas, the physical practices that work with the breath, affect the mind, emotions and intellect. The practices of pratyahara, dharana and dhyana do not only affect the mind but also the body, as the mind and body are integrated realities. They cannot be separated. If they are separated, existence will cease. Total development of the human personality is the aim of yoga, and its attainment includes the practice of asanas.

Do some people fear the changes that yoga may bring about in their life?

Swami Satyananda: The greatest drawback of yoga is that it makes a person into a cultured human being and does not allow him to go back to his animal instincts: so people are afraid of yoga. Nevertheless, in Europe and America there are large centres of yoga where well known personalities, including actors and actresses, singers, musicians, artists, poets and dancers, take a keen interest in yoga. For worldwide propagation of yoga, the cooperation of every individual is essential. The times are changing very fast and yoga will be accepted as one of the necessities of life, for yoga is the culture of tomorrow.



2

History of Hatha Yoga

ORIGINS

Where did the knowledge of yoga come from?

Swami Sivananda: The most auspicious and useful work of Lord Shiva for the benefit of humanity, was imparting the knowledge of the yogas to the world. He blesses those who deserve His grace, for they cannot be free of samsara without His grace.

What are the origins of hatha yoga?

Swami Satyananda: According to the history of yoga as written in the scriptures, Shiva is considered to be the first proponent of the science of yoga. So he is called the *adi* or original guru of yoga. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:1), Yogi Swatmarama says:

*Shreeaadinaathaaya namo'stu tasmai yenopadishtaa hathayogavidyaa;
Vibhraajate pronnataaraajayogamaarodhumichchhoradhirohineeava.*

Salutations to the glorious primal (original) guru, Sri Adinath, who instructed the knowledge of hatha yoga which shines forth as a stairway for those who wish to ascend to the highest stage of yoga, raja yoga.

Sri Adinath is one of the names given to Lord Shiva, who is Supreme Cosmic Consciousness. The cosmic consciousness or universal spirit is known by many names. It is one and

the same, and the original source from which creation and sentient beings evolved. It is that power which resides in all. The force is known as the guru, as when the realization of its existence dawns, it takes one out of the darkness of ignorance into the light of reality. The Nath sect of yogis called it *Adinath*, primal master or protector. Yogi Swatmarama, the author of *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, belonged to the Nath sect, therefore he respects Shiva in the form of Adinath. In the same way, Yogi Srinivasa begins *Hatharatnavali* (1:1):

*Om shree aadinaatham natvaa'tha shreenivaaso mahaamatih;
Hatharatnaavaleem dhatte yoginaam kanthabhooshitaam.*

Bowing towards Sri Adinatha, the great scholar Srinivasa starts writing *Hatharatnavali*, which is like an ornament for the yogis to be worn around the neck.

How was hatha yoga originally disseminated?

Swami Satyananda: According to the story in the *Puranas*, Lord Shiva's first disciple was his wife Parvati. He was instructing her into the secret sadhanas of yoga in an isolated place, near the bank of a river. There was nobody around but a large fish, who was listening intently to the dialogue. Parvati saw the fish listening and was happy that it had taken a keen interest in yoga. She prayed to Lord Shiva to transform that fish into a human being, so the fish was reborn as a man.

The man born from that fish was called Matsyendranath. He became famous in yogic history as the first of the Nath yogis, a sect which propagated hatha yoga. Yogi Matsyendranath used to sit in a particular asana for meditation, which became known as *matsyendrasana*, fish pose. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:4) the lineage is given:

*Hatharvidyaam hi matsyendragorakshaadyaa vijaanate;
Svaatmaaraamo'thavaa yogee jaaneete tatprasaadatah.*

Yogi Matsyendranath knew the knowledge of hatha yoga. He gave it to Gorakhnath and others, and by their grace the author (Swatmarama) learned it.

There are many stories concerning the birth of Gorakhnath. It is said that when Matsyendranath was begging for food as a parivrajaka he met a woman who lamented to him her woe at not having a son. Matsyendranath gave her some siddha vibhooti and told her that if she ate it, she would obtain a son. The woman did not eat the substance but cast it upon a pile of cow dung. Twelve years later when Matsyendranath was passing through the same village, he visited her to see the child. The woman told the yogi what she had done and he asked to be taken to the spot where she had thrown the vibhooti. He called the name, "Gorakhnath," and immediately a radiant twelve-year-old lad emerged from the pile of cow dung.

Gorakhnath became the dutiful disciple of Matsyendranath, and later became an expounder of hatha yoga and the founder of the Nath sect. He was an accomplished guru credited with the performance of many miracles. Members of the Nath sect were held in high esteem due to their severe penances, austere yogic lifestyle and the accomplishment of many siddhis.

The effect of the Nath yogis was felt right across the old world. Great Nath yogis journeyed through Persia, Afghanistan and the entire Middle and Far East. Their influence was felt all over India and Nepal and particularly around Gorakhpur and the Nepalese border. Even to this day, Nath yogis can still be found in India, although few have the same reputation as the original masters.

Which are the classical texts from the traditional literature of hatha yoga?

Swami Satyananda: In yogic literature there are a few reliable texts on hatha yoga. One is by yogi Gorakhnath which is known as the *Gorakhsha Samhita*. Another text is *Gheranda Samhita* by the great sage, Gheranda. Besides these two, there is another very well known text on hatha yoga which is *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* by Yogi Swatmarama. There is a fourth text on hatha yoga known as *Hatharatnavali*. All of these texts were

supposed to have been written between the 6th and 17th centuries AD.

There are also minor references to hatha yoga in the ancient Upanishads and Puranas. The Upanishads date back further than the Buddhist period, which was around the 6th century BC. The references to hatha yoga made in the Upanishads prove that the science was well known before this period. There is another very important text known as *Srimat Bhagavatam*, the story of Sri Krishna. In that voluminous book there are several chapters containing references to hatha yoga.

This gives a glimpse into the historical aspect of hatha yoga. For centuries these books have guided spiritual aspirants. Many sects were also formed in India, Nepal and Tibet on the basis of hatha yoga. What is the subject matter of these books? Is it just to maintain a youthful body or to obtain siddhis, psychic powers, or is it to develop the capacity to awaken the kundalini and attain samadhi? If these texts are analyzed carefully, the purpose becomes very clear.

Is it possible that yoga started with the evolution of Homo sapiens in Africa and spread with their migration?

Swami Niranjanananda: The tradition says that yoga is extremely ancient but it is difficult to pinpoint whether it developed with Homo sapiens in Africa and then moved with them around the world or not. But is yoga a practice only? No. Yoga began when the primitive peoples first became aware of themselves as individuals and started to ask the great questions. What is this? Where am I? What are those glittering things in the sky? What is that ball of fire in the sky? What is that silvery disc at night that I see? What are those twinkling lights? How do I live, how do I survive? What is my role? Who are my parents? Who was my mother? She was eaten by a mammoth or a sabre tooth tiger. Why do I need to eat?

From that moment, the quest of spiritual life started in every human being. That is the common ground. After all, as

children people still lie on the ground, look up at the sky and wonder, how are those twinkling stars hanging up there? The questions are the same, but due to the information available today the answers are easily known. In those ancient times, due to the absence of information, people had to rely on their own wisdom, understanding and experience. “Who am I?” was the first question and later on these questions led to the development of various philosophies, systems and beliefs, which are still ingrained in our genes today.

When such questions emerged in people’s minds, over a period of time it led to the discovery of yoga. Whether yoga was practised in the American continent or the European continent or the Asian continent or the African continent, five thousand years ago or four thousand or three thousand years ago, is secondary. The primary point is that yoga provided a way for people to know their relationship and connection with nature and with the cosmos. It was a journey of discovery and we cannot pinpoint which civilization started it.

What evidence exists of the ancient yogic culture?

Swami Niranjanananda: Statues and other evidence of the ancient yogic culture date back about five thousand years. It would be even older than that, however, as for any philosophy or subject to develop takes many, many hundreds of years, it takes many generations.

If the shastras are studied and if it is believed that there have been other civilizations in the past on this planet – that this is not the first and the final civilization – then maybe yoga was left to us by the previous civilization and we simply adopted it as part of our tradition and culture.

Evidence of such civilizations is emerging in the form of Atlantis, in the form of other continents which have been submerged and whose people have migrated. This means that prior to the current civilization which started in the last ten thousand years, after the last ice age, there were other civilizations. It is not possible, therefore, to give a date to the emergence of yoga.

What was the original purpose of asanas on the spiritual path?

Swami Niranjanananda: When yoga first appeared its purpose was to discover the inner potential which is spiritual, not material. At the same time, those who developed yoga realized that growth had to take place in all dimensions of existence. The body needs to be harmonized so that it can manage illness, disease and physical stress.

To manage physical imbalances, the physical postures, which have become famous worldwide, were developed. Many people do them as stretching exercises or as aerobic exercises to experience lightness in the body and freedom from tension and tightness.

Physical harmony alters and influences the activity in the brain and this cerebral and physical harmony alters the mental behaviour. In the process of harmonizing the personality, the mind also comes in tune with its inner strengths. This is the beginning of yoga.

EVOLUTION

What is the relative importance of the written and oral traditions in the evolution of yoga?

Swami Satyananda: The origin of yoga lies hidden in the mists of prehistory. It was slowly evolved and developed by the ancient sages, not only in India but all over the world. It has, however, been modified to suit regional languages, social ideas and other cultural influences. The essence of yoga was wrapped up in or explained in different symbols, analogies and languages. Some traditions believe that yoga was a divine gift revealed to the ancient sages so that humanity could have the opportunity to realize its divine nature.

Generally the techniques of yoga were passed on from teacher or guru to their disciples by word of mouth. In this way there was a clear understanding of the meaning of the techniques and aims of yoga as the guru, through his personal experience, guided the students along the right

path and away from any confusion and misunderstanding. It was only when the various systems of yoga were written down that people began to see contradictions in the teachings. These discrepancies were only superficial, however, and arose through misinterpretation.

The writers of the classical texts cannot be blamed, for they recorded their ideas on yoga as clearly as possible in order to avoid misinterpretation. They expounded their ideas with the minimum amount of words so that people would not lose themselves by trying to intellectualize about word meanings, or in other cases they clothed their writings in symbolism and analogies. This was done so that only a person prepared and ready for a teaching would be able to understand the symbolism, if necessary with the help of a guru.

Nevertheless, even though these precautions were taken, many misunderstandings arose, mainly among overly verbose and intellectual scholars who did not have the personal experience to support their commentaries. Unfortunately people have listened to the commentators without resorting to the original texts and the advice of people more in touch with the spirit of yoga. The result has been confusion, and as a consequence many well-intentioned people have performed the most bizarre acts in the name of yoga. Some often quoted examples are walking on fire, sitting in the midday sun and torturing the body in a variety of ways, such as standing on one leg in one place for months on end.

The yoga that we now know and which developed in India, was used, at least in its rudimentary form, more than five thousand years ago. In archeological excavations made in the Indus Valley at Harappa and Mohanjodaro, in what is now Pakistan, various statues have been unearthed depicting people practising yoga. They show Lord Shiva and his wife Parvati sitting in asanas and practising meditation. These ruins were once the dwelling places of people who lived in the so-called pre-vedic age. These discoveries are a definite indicator that yoga was practised in India even

before the Aryan civilization started to flourish on the Indus subcontinent.

The first books to mention yoga are the ancient Vedas. Though scholars are not positive, it is generally felt that these books were written at least four thousand five hundred years ago. They don't give any specific yoga practices but generally allude to yoga in symbolic form. The seers of the Vedas clearly recognized that there existed a dynamic life principle which they called *vayu*, prana. They clearly saw that this prana was closely related to breathing. The Vedas also briefly mention the existence of *chakras*, pranic centres, within but not of the physical body. The science of sound was clearly recognized for they mention various mantras that can be used for the attainment of material goals as well as spiritual aims.

Therefore, it can be said that the concept of yoga was known in vedic times in one form or another, as it had been for many thousands of years before. In all probability, however, the system of yoga was not properly formulated before or during the time of the recording of the Vedas. The experiences of yoga were known but the science of yoga had yet to be systematized.

With the advent of the Brahmanas and the Upanishads yoga began to take shape and assume the form that it has today, and it is the Upanishads which put yoga on a firmer foundation. The Sanskrit word *upanishad* can be interpreted to mean 'to sit down near and receive teachings from a master', and also as 'secret teaching'. There are believed to have been about two hundred different Upanishads. The oldest was written somewhere around 600 BC and the most recent as late as the fifteenth century AD.

Many of the Upanishads devote much space to describing prana and its implications. They describe the psychic pathways which exist within, and through which prana flows, including the major nadis, ida, pingala and sushumna. The concept of kundalini in the form of a serpent power within the body is also indicated. One of the so-called minor

Upanishads, the *Yoga Chudamani Upanishad*, covers a wide range of practical aspects of yoga ranging from asanas and pranayamas to psychic centres and self-realization. The other Upanishads are also a source of many practical and theoretical principles of yoga.

The Upanishads, however, lack a systematic treatment and summary of the paths of yoga. They are a conglomeration of profound ideas mixed with various other kinds of information. It can be said that the Upanishads are intended more to inspire than to instruct. During the era of the writing of the Upanishads, right up until quite recently, instructions were always imparted personally by a guru. The writers knew this, so detailed techniques were not recorded. This was left to the discretion of the guru and to later yogic texts.

At the same time as the spiritual and yogic literature was unfolding, yoga was being refined and developed by its practitioners and gurus, who then passed on their teachings by word of mouth. In fact, it is certainly these people who evolved and improvised yoga practices by their personal experience in an endeavour to achieve the best results. All the texts can do is reflect current and prevalent ideas.

Since the teachings of yoga were generally passed on orally, its development was haphazard. Different teachers taught different methods so that before it was systematized, yoga was a collection of varied and unrelated techniques, riddled with all types of personal beliefs and superstitions. It is here that the writers of the classical texts served their greatest purpose by bringing all these different ideas together and integrating them. One of the most successful of these writers was Sage Patanjali, who wrote the text called the *Yoga Sutras* some time before the birth of Christ. This is still regarded as the classical and authoritative book on raja yoga.

Large numbers of hatha yoga texts were written throughout the ages. The most well known of these are the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, the *Shiva Samhita* and the *Gheranda Samhita*. These texts give details on asanas, pranayamas and other hatha yoga practices, together with techniques for

performing mudras and bandhas. All the books, however, emphasize that the hatha yoga practices are not specifically aimed at making the body healthy. They are a means to higher ideals which first demand a healthy body.

There are many sages and yogis who have contributed to the growth of yoga, both in ancient and in modern times. The list is endless. The number of books on yoga runs into the thousands and the list grows with every year that passes. For personal growth through yoga, however, it is not necessary to read any of these books, as yoga is one hundred percent practice. The techniques are widely available in modern books on yoga, in ashrams and yoga schools and can be learnt from a competent guru, which is the best way.

How did hatha yoga evolve as a system of physical practices?

Swami Satyananda: Although Buddha was a great personality, his teachings relate to psychological experiences. As Buddhism evolved it became divided into a number of sects – the orthodox and the open-minded Buddhists. The liberal Buddhist sects began to include *tantra*, however this was not something Buddha had directly preached about so the orthodox Buddhists did not believe in it and the practices of the tantric sects were very much misinterpreted by the orthodox people. After about five hundred years the popularity and influence of Buddhism declined and so did these tantric sects.

Then from the 4th to 6th centuries AD some great yogis took the science and set out to purify the tantric system. Matsyendranath, Gorakhnath and a few other yogis in the tradition found that this important science was being ignored by serious-minded people and being wrongly taught by others. So they separated the hatha yoga and the raja yoga practices of tantra from the rest and left out the rituals of tantra altogether, not even mentioning them.

When they culled the practices they picked up the useful, practical and noble practices of yoga from the tantric system. At that time it became necessary for them to classify some of

the unclassified instructions in tantra. That is how the system of hatha yoga was established.

Was the system of hatha yoga a significant departure from the accepted approach to spiritual life?

Swami Satyananda: Out of many, many authorities on hatha yoga, one is an outstanding personality. His name is Swatmarama. He compiled a book on the hatha yoga system, known as the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*. This can be translated as *Light on Hatha Yoga*. The term *pradipika*, however, actually means self-illuminating or that which illumines. It is a text which illumines a multitude of physical, mental and spiritual problems for aspirants.

Before him, the chief disciple of Matsyendranath had already written in Hindi. The name of that disciple was Gorakhnath. He was a yogi much greater than his own guru. He wrote books and poems on hatha yoga in the local dialect. But in India there is a tradition that the original texts must be in Sanskrit. So Yogi Swatmarama compiled the entire wisdom of hatha yoga in Sanskrit.

The beauty of *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* is that it solves a very great problem facing every aspirant. The shatkarmas, asanas and pranayamas, which are covered in other texts, are discussed but the yamas and niyamas of raja yoga, and of the Buddhist and Jain system were completely eliminated. Experience has taught that in order to practise *yama* and *niyama*, discipline and self-control, a certain quality of mind is needed. Often when one tries to practise self-control and discipline the result is more problems in the mind and personality. If harmony is not created in the personality, then self-control and self-discipline create more conflict than peace of mind. Restraint and self-control have always been expounded as philosophical or religious principles, but from the spiritual standpoint they have mercilessly failed to assist humanity in the task of evolution.

In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* the first thing one notices is that Yogi Swatmarama does not worry about self-control and self-

discipline in the form of yama and niyama at all. Self-control and self-discipline should start with the body. That is much easier. Asanas are discipline, pranayamas are discipline, and *kumbhaka*, retention of breath, is control. Sit in *padmasana*, the lotus pose, for fifteen minutes – that is self-discipline. Why fight with the mind first? One has no power to wrestle with the mind, yet people always wrestle with the mind. Thereby a pattern of animosity is created within the mind itself! One mind wants to break discipline while the other mind wants to maintain discipline. But there are not two minds – one mind is trying to split itself in two. This split can be found in everybody.

The danger was clearly realized by the authorities and masters of hatha yoga. Therefore they said, first discipline the body, and explained what they meant by the body. They said that the subtle elements or *tattwas* and the energy channels or *nadis* within the body should be purified. They said that the behaviour of *prana*, the vital force, the entire nervous system and the various secretions in the body should be properly maintained and harmonized.

It should always be kept in mind that the body, the mind and the spirit are not three, they are one. At one level of existence the body is experienced. At another level, existence is perceived as the mind. Spirit should never be considered to be different from the body or the body to be different from spirit. They are one. The basis of this body is divine.

Why was a systematic approach to hatha yoga developed?

Swami Satyananda: There is a proverb, “Many sages, many opinions”. The final goal in yoga is the attainment of *kaivalya*, the highest stage of samadhi, at which point raja yoga culminates. Ultimately, all spiritual practices and branches of yoga lead to that state but there are as many ways of reaching the goal as there are individuals in the world. If we try to follow and believe that every path is applicable to ourselves, we will never attain the final experience.

A person's individual method has to be systematic. Whether one practises karma yoga, bhakti yoga, kriya yoga, jnana yoga, Zen Buddhism, or a combination of a few varying techniques, one needs an ordered system, and that system must be followed from beginning to end, without diverging and trying other systems and gurus along the way. Believing in one system, following it for a while and then leaving it for another, leads nowhere. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:3) it is stated:

*Bhraantya bahumatadhvaante raajayogamajaanataam;
Hatha pradepikaam dhatte svaatmaaraamah kripaakarah.*

The highest state of raja yoga is unknown due to misconceptions (darkness) created by varying ideas and concepts. In good will and as a blessing, Swatmarama offers light on hatha yoga.

Yogi Swatmarama offers hatha yoga so that people may be guided along an assured path. The word 'offers' or *kripakara* should be noted. *Kripa* means 'blessing', and a blessing can only be given by someone with spiritual attainment. It can be said that hatha yoga comes in the form of a saving grace to those who are stumbling in darkness. Swatmarama is not preaching or propagating, but humbly showing a way which may be easier for the average person to follow in order to come closer to raja yoga.

Has yoga always been available to society or was there a time when it was for sannyasins only?

Swami Niranjanananda: There is archeological evidence that in ancient times yoga existed in many civilizations around the world, such as in South America, Egypt and Scandinavia. Due to the ravages of time it declined, was suppressed and ultimately forgotten. In Asia, however, the culture of yoga continued to thrive. In the course of time Asia also went through a lot of political and ideological changes, and during this period many of the remaining yogic

enclaves were destroyed, as also happened in Afghanistan. Afghanistan used to be a very powerful centre for spiritual life – for Buddhism, and all the mystical sciences and arts, just as Tibet is. But in the course of history everything is destroyed and people no longer know their heritage. Those who do know are not free to speak out, due to restrictions imposed by belief, culture, tradition and religion. Over time, therefore, even in Asia these different spiritual enclaves were destroyed or neglected.

The same thing actually happened in India and people had no idea of what yoga was. Through divine grace, however, some renunciates and recluses living in isolation continued to maintain the tradition. It was preserved in a secret form in India by a group of renunciates called sannyasins. These sannyasins who preserved the knowledge of the tradition of yoga lived away from society and dedicated their lives to contemplation, to understanding the intricate connection between nature, humanity and the divine. When it was felt by these seers of India that in the future society would need yogic intervention to manage their own difficulties and problems and distresses in life, they started to propagate yoga to society.

So even in India people believed that yoga was only for renunciates who aspired for God-realization, and that it had nothing to do with society. People elsewhere only knew of yoga as part of Eastern mysticism. They had a vision of fakirs lying on beds of nails, climbing ropes, or living in isolation high up in the mountains surrounded by snow and ice without any covering on their bodies. That was the concept, the image that people had of yoga – something mystical, something Eastern, possibly pagan, and not for us.

It was the sannyasins who revived yoga. The first person to speak about yoga was Swami Vivekananda when he went to Chicago in 1893. But he only spoke on the theory he did not give any practice. After him came Paramahansa Yogananda and Swami Sivananda. They became the inspirers of the yogic renaissance in the world. Gradually, since the 1950s,

yoga has become increasingly accepted and popular, not as a mystical tradition, but as a way of life.

Who established and maintained the yogic traditions?

Swami Niranjanananda: There are different levels of knowing yoga. One level is going into a tradition and seeing the relevance of yoga from the beginning until the present, and seeing oneself as a part of that stream of thought. There have been many household yoga teachers. B.K.S. Iyengar is not a sannyasin yet his life is totally devoted to the propagation of yoga. Dr Nagendra from Vivekananda Kendra, Bangalore, is not a sannyasin but his whole life is devoted to yoga. I am talking here of the yogic traditions not of the sannyasa traditions. T. Krishnamacharya, Desikacharya, and Iyengar represent a tradition of yoga.

People such as Swami Abhedananda and Swami Vivekananda represent separate traditions of yoga. The tradition of Babaji, Sri Yukteshwara, Lahiri Mahasaya and Paramahansa Yogananda is another tradition of yoga. There is the tradition that emanates from Swami Sivananda through Swami Satchidananda, Swami Vishnudevananda, Swami Satyananda, Swami Venkateshananda, Swami Chidananda and others of the Sivananda lineage. There are many traditions of yoga and many people have made such traditions or paths a part of their lifestyle, profession and expression in life.

Where did the various branches of yoga evolve?

Swami Niranjanananda: In India yoga is divided into two groups: the yoga of North India and the yoga of South India. The yogas of South India are hatha yoga and kriya yoga. These are the two major yogas which developed in South India and even today the *acharyas* of that tradition, the masters of that tradition, propagate hatha yoga, but the kriya yoga tradition is now lost in the South. The Krishnamacharya tradition, represented by Desikacharya and Iyengar, who are followers of hatha yoga, belong to the southern lineage of yoga.

In the north it seems that people had more tendency to reflect and to practise and develop different systems of yoga, not only as a practice but as a system to incorporate into their life. They developed raja yoga, bhakti yoga, karma yoga, jnana yoga and kundalini yoga, and they took kriya yoga and hatha yoga from the south.

What is known about the author of the hatha yoga text, *Gheranda Samhita*?

Swami Niranjanananda: No one knows where or when Sage Gheranda was born, but his teachings were propagated in the north-eastern region of India and seem to have been unknown in the south.

Gheranda Samhita is a text on practical yoga by Sage Gheranda. From the oldest surviving copies of *Gheranda Samhita* it can be inferred that as a literary work it began in the seventeenth century. Of fourteen available manuscripts found in northern and eastern India and used for critical editions of *Gheranda Samhita*, the earliest copy dates back to 1802. As an oral tradition passed from guru to disciple these secret teachings would probably have survived for several centuries at least before being written down.

In this work he describes Lord Vishnu (7:18):

*Jale vishnu sthale vishnu rvishnuh parvatmastake;
Jvaalaamaalaakule vishnuh sarvam vishnumayam jagat.*

Lord Vishnu is in water, Vishnu is in the earth, Vishnu is on the mountain top and Vishnu is in the flames of fire. Thus, this entire universe is indeed pervaded by Lord Vishnu.

This means Vishnu is in water and Vishnu is on land. In one or two other places Lord Narayana is also described, so it can be inferred that the sage had adopted Vaishnava philosophy in his life as well as being an accomplished hatha yogi. His form of yoga brings out knowledge by beginning with the body and progressing all the way to the essence of the soul. An outline of practices is given within this framework.

Is the yoga of today different to traditional yoga?

Swami Niranjanananda: Although yoga has undergone changes in understanding, the tradition of yoga itself has not changed. The same practices are being done today as Sage Patanjali did, without any modifications. The same hatha yoga practices that sages Gorakhnath, Matsyendranath and Swatmarama and other literatures talk about, are being done today, as they were practised thousands of years ago. The only change that has taken place is in people's way of living, their way of knowing and perceiving things. While yoga practitioners lived in mud huts thousands of years ago, today they live in a house or an apartment in Manhattan, Sydney, London, Rome or Moscow.

Yoga has not changed, the tradition is the same, but the way of understanding it has changed. That which in the past was known subjectively through experience can now be known through scientific means. If a person was ill, practised an asana, felt better and found that eventually the illness disappeared, it was a subjective experience, and the person said, "For this illness, such and such asana is beneficial." If the same advice is followed today, the result will be the same, as the condition of the human body is the same and the asana is the same. But today the results can also be verified using scientific methodology.

There is no such thing as traditional yoga and modern yoga, as the practices have not changed in any way. Modern-day understanding of the yogic principles, however, is more objective and scientific as there is more awareness of how the yoga techniques work on the body and mind. In the traditional understanding of yoga, faith was the most important aspect. That faith has now been replaced by scientific and systematic understanding. In regard to the health aspect of yoga, if somebody had, for example, diabetes, they were asked to perform certain asanas and they got better, it was not specifically known why. But now, with the advance of modern science the changes taking place in the functioning of the internal organs can be observed,

and therefore exactly what is happening inside the body is known. The same principle applies to the mind and psyche.

The way of understanding has changed and this has resulted in a different outlook on yoga. Maybe when this civilization dies, the next civilization will again practise yoga from the aspect of faith. The practices themselves never change, only from time to time they are given a different name, and a different understanding is achieved.

Yoga is concerned with improving the qualities of life and therefore since ancient times it has been presented to human society in many different ways. It has been presented as a *vidya*, an understanding and knowledge of life. It has been presented as a *vijnana*, a science using the practices of yoga for one's sequential development. It has also been identified as a *sanskriti* or culture as it empowers the individual to express the best of their life spontaneously, perfectly and creatively. In this manner yoga has been presented by the rishis in different forms at different times, according to the needs of society.

How has the concept of yoga been adapted to changing times?

Swami Niranjanananda: Yoga has not changed, but the concept of yoga has changed with the times. In Britain during the early 1960s there was a yoga teacher by the name of Richard Hittleman who taught yoga on TV for beautifying the body. At that time in Australia, Roma Blair was teaching yoga for physical fitness and reduction of the waistline. Swami Saraswati, who is not related to this lineage, also came up with her brand of yoga in Australia. That period of yogic propagation was confined to the aspect of asana for the physical body, as the whole concept was new.

Nobody taught pranayama or even knew what it was. Pranayama was considered to be a type of breathing exercise that was very difficult and dangerous to do. Nobody had ever heard of mudra, bandha or shatkarma, of kriya yoga, raja yoga, bhakti yoga or karma yoga for that matter.

Later on, the concept and the thrust of yoga changed. With the emergence of Transcendental Meditation (TM) it became a way to attain mental relaxation, reduce stress and anxiety and find some form of mental peace. Then many different groups and individuals adopted the yogic structure, creating their own brands of yoga.

A new approach to yoga is emerging, but yoga has not changed. The practices, theories and concepts are the same, but our acceptance, understanding and application are changing. The need to look deeper into yoga has become more evident. As people find themselves thrown into conflict in relation to society, family and work, they lose balance, inner peace and harmony. Due to these influences, which are both external and internal, a method is being looked for whereby the personality can be integrated. This integration has become the main thrust of yoga teaching.

How has the lineage to which Bihar School of Yoga belongs contributed to the evolution of hatha yoga?

Swami Niranjanananda: Swami Sivananda used to tell people, “Always strive to expand your horizons of knowledge. Always try to understand your own needs and the needs of other people and always try to extend a helping hand to everyone who needs it.” In Swami Sivananda’s teachings, acquisition of knowledge is the first thing that human beings can do to improve the quality of life. This knowledge is internal, not external. It means knowing the various dimensions of the personality and mind in order to improve them, so that creativity, peace and contentment become natural expressions and experiences. As a medical doctor, Swami Sivananda understood science, human anatomy and physiology, and the mind. He made an effort to remove the trappings of mysticism from yoga and to teach yoga in a very practical and systematic form so that people could discover themselves.

Yoga, however, is much more ancient than the teachings of Swami Sivananda that were given in the twentieth

century. The purpose of yoga is to provide a method for the individual to experience physical health, mental awareness and tranquillity, and spiritual upliftment. These are the three main aims of yogic practices. The physical practices are *asana* and *pranayama*, postures and breathing techniques. The mental practices are *pratyahara*, techniques of relaxation and developing awareness, and *dharana*, techniques developing concentration. The spiritual dimensions of yoga can be experienced when meditation is practised. This is how the system of yoga originally developed. Later, many people added various practices, concepts and theories to this body of yoga according to their discoveries and understanding of human nature, human behaviour and human possibilities.

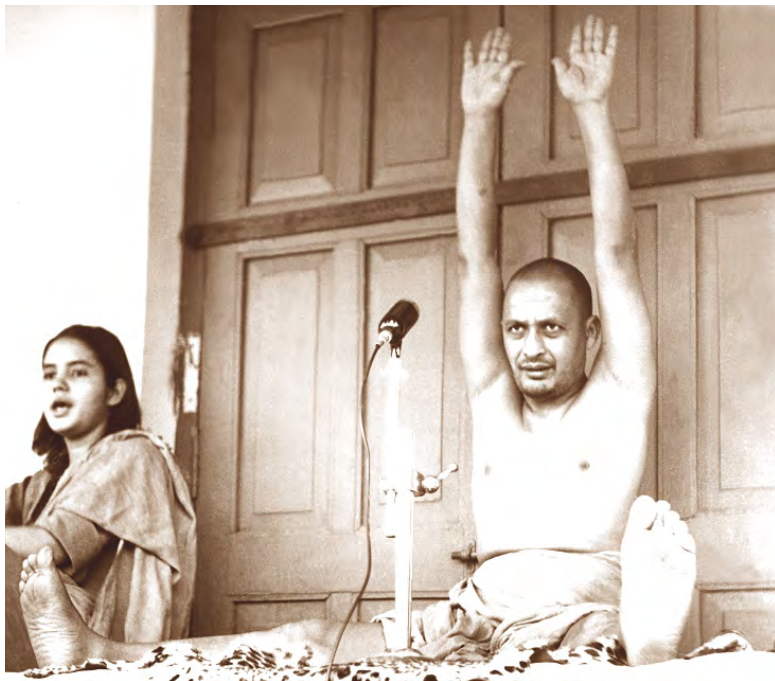
Yogis believed that although, from birth to death, we go through many different experiences related to the senses and mind, there is the possibility of modifying, improving and transforming the limited expressions of the senses, mind and emotions, and converting the thoughts and feelings into more expansive, outreaching and peaceful expressions. This was the beginning of yoga.

Thousands of years later, Swami Sivananda brought the practical aspects of yoga to the public. Prior to Swami Sivananda, many people spoke about yoga, but as theory, not practice. Swami Sivananda and his disciples made yoga available to the public as a practical and scientific subject. Swami Satyananda researched the ancient yogic theories and literature and developed many of the physical, mental and spiritual practices of today, including pawanmuktasana, pranayama, yoga nidra, pratyahara and dharana techniques, and kriya and kundalini yoga. This tradition emphasizes the integration of body, mind and spirit. It takes the essence of yoga from the ancient past and develops the practices to enable a better and brighter future for humanity, exemplifying the growth and application of yoga in the context of modern society.

In the time of Swami Satyananda yoga was introduced to a broad range of people in different countries and cultures.

He started a trend which took the aspirant beyond the superficial dimension into a deeper understanding of what yoga has to offer and how it could be applied in one's life.

When certain ideas became clear, a new approach to yogic education was started with the formation of a yoga university, the first of its kind in the world. The seed of this undertaking was planted in November 1993 during the World Yoga Convention, which was organized in Munger to commemorate the fifty years of renunciation and service to humanity of Paramahansa Satyananda. The university was to provide ample scope for studying, understanding and applying the subtle aspects of yoga. It can be seen, therefore, that the goals of the people involved in and trying to propagate yoga have had to be redefined and rethought from generation to generation. It is a dynamic process.



3

Hatha Yoga in Other Traditions and Cultures

TANTRA

What is the relationship between hatha yoga and tantra?

Swami Satyananda: Yoga is well known, yet tantra is surrounded and veiled in an aura of superstition and mystery. In a way this is very strange, for in fact yoga and tantra are in essence the same system. They are intimately related. To be more specific, yoga is a part of the more encompassing, wider system of tantra. All hatha yoga practices such as asanas and pranayamas and all yogic paths such as karma yoga, bhakti yoga, kundalini yoga, hatha yoga, mantra yoga and kriya yoga are an integral part of tantra. All the practices that are known as yoga are also part of tantra.

The meaning of *yoga* is union, to yoke, to join. Yoga is a process of fission, separation of matter and energy followed by a process of fusion, a union, a yoking together of individual and cosmic consciousness. Tantra and yoga have exactly the same meaning. They are not two different philosophies. Yoga and tantra are only two different words belonging to the same way of life. More accurately, it can be said that yoga is the practical aspect, while tantra is the philosophical, theoretical aspect of the same way of life. What tantra tells us, yoga asks us to practise.

Tantra and yoga should be viewed as one science, not as two sciences. The different books on yoga have all been

reproduced from tantric texts, not from any other school of philosophy. Some people say that the science of yoga originated from Samkhya philosophy, but this is not really true. Yoga as it is widely known and practised, the yoga that has been practised in India for thousands of years, comes directly from tantra. Even Samkhya, which is a wonderful system of classifying the material world as a means to enlightenment (a way of jnana yoga to be more specific), is an integral part of certain sections of tantra, namely Kashmir Shaivism. In a wider sense, yoga has its roots in all religious systems, whether the path of the Vedas, Christianity or Buddhism. Yoga is an integral part of all religions. But the classified system of yoga as it is known, the form of yoga that originated, developed and flourished in the rich environment of India, comes almost completely from tantra.

What is taught as yoga in both the East and the West is really tantra. Tantra is the mother and yoga is the son. The varied and diverse yogas which are all over the world today originated from tantra. The asanas and pranayamas taught throughout the world, the *mudras*, psychic attitudes, the great system of inner locks called *bandhas*, the chakras and *kundalini yoga*, the study of psychic awakening, *hatha yoga*, which balances the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, *mantra yoga*, the study of mantra with astrological, birth and ascendant signs – where do all these types of knowledge come from? They come from tantra.

Tantra covers a vast range of interests, from rituals to rules of regulating one's life, from astrology to ayurvedic medicine. Yoga on the other hand is more specific; it is concerned with directly influencing the mind and body as a method of attaining good health, mental peace and eventually higher awareness. Tantra has the same aim, but it includes within its fold a greater range of methods and interests.

Hatha yoga is a branch or a part of tantra. The preparation for tantra has to be through the practices of hatha yoga. The physical body should first be purified, the pranic body

should be purified, one should be able to practise uddiyana bandha and vajroli. One should be able to concentrate on the mid-eyebrow centre, only then can any branch of tantra be practised. Therefore, when hatha yoga is practised, it must be remembered that it is not in any way different to tantra.

Is the prana of hatha yoga the same as shakti in tantra?

Swami Satyananda: In tantric and various other scriptures, energy or *prana* is symbolized by the all-powerful divine mother *Shakti*, or Kali and other goddesses. It is regarded as the feminine aspect of existence, the fertile ground on which consciousness – represented by various gods, notably *Shiva* – can take root, grow and manifest in the universe. Shakti or prana is the womb of existence. The main theme of tantra is the unification of Shiva and Shakti so that consciousness can express itself perfectly through the medium of energy, prana. Shiva is the sight and Shakti is the eye. Shiva is the hearing and Shakti is the ears. Prana and its control are integral in many systems, but it is known by different names. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:64) it says:

*Sushumnaayai kundalinyai sudhaayai chandrajanmane;
Manonmanyai namastubhyam mahaashaktyai chidaatmane.*

Salutations to sushumna, kundalini, the nectar flowing from the moon, to the mindless state of mind (manonmani), to the great Shakti, to the atma.

Why is the practice of hatha yoga relevant on the path of tantra?

Swami Satyananda: It is important for a tantric to practise hatha yoga, for hatha yoga is the basic preparation for the fulfilment of the aim of tantra. What exactly is hatha yoga? It is the fusion of ida and pingala, the mental and pranic forces. The union of Shiva and Shakti, the two principles in the body, is hatha yoga. The union takes place in *ajna chakra*, which is situated just behind the eyebrow centre. At ajna, these two channels of prana and consciousness unite with

each other. When this union takes place with the practices of concentration, the aspirant is able to go beyond the frontiers of mental experience.

The shatkarmas alone are not hatha yoga. Just as in raja yoga one starts with yama and niyama, in the same way, the shatkarmas come first in hatha yoga. Then there are asanas, pranayamas, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi. Through the practice of hatha yoga, the whole structure of one's body is purified so that the consciousness can flow through the chakras without any barrier or hurdle. Therefore, the aspirant must practise hatha yoga with diligence and proper understanding.

Sometimes there is a tendency to overemphasize the postures or pranayama or something else. However, there has to be an absolute balance of all the practices: asanas, pranayamas, mudras and bandhas. If the mind and body are not pure the pranas cannot function properly. In that case when the mind crosses the frontiers, the experience will be faulty. It will be devilish, frightening, disheartening and frustrating.

The experiences which are had when one crosses the frontiers depend on the perfect practice of yoga. When a person goes to sleep with a bad stomach, they have bad dreams. In the same way, if one has an impure physical body, the experiences will be impure. Therefore, the practices of hatha yoga should be learned and practised diligently in order to progress on the path of tantra.

Is the practice of hatha yoga actually tantric?

Swami Satyananda: It is said in tantra that Shiva without Shakti is incapable of accomplishing anything, although Shiva is considered to be the ultimate aim of Shakti. A tantric aspirant, therefore, tries to awaken the shakti and conduct it through a particular path up to the destination in sahasrara chakra. To do this, one has to know what that path is.

The tantric books and the hatha yoga books say it is sushumna, a particular pathway that emanates from

mooladhara chakra, passing through the spinal passage up to ajna chakra. This passage is invisible and it is closed in everybody. It does not function at all. In order to make this particular pathway function, one has to do hatha yoga. Hatha yoga is a part of tantra and therefore, all those who teach and practise hatha yoga are tantrics whether they know it or not.

The *shatkarmas* or purificatory processes of hatha yoga are intended to purify the nadis, the humors, the hormones and the general physical system in the body. After practising these for a considerable period of time, the practices of *pranayama*, which means retention or *kumbhaka*, are introduced. When practising pranayama, mantra should be practised at the same time. Through these and a few more practices, the pathway becomes clear. Only then should an attempt be made to awaken the shakti. When the shakti is awakened and the path is clear, there is an immediate union between the two in sahasrara chakra. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (3:108) the awakening of shakti by the effort of hatha yoga is described:

*Kundalee kutilaakaaraa sarpavatparikeertitaa;
Saa shaktishchaalitaa yena sa mukto naatra samshayah.*

Kundalini is said to be coiled like a snake. Without a doubt, one who makes that shakti flow obtains liberation.

In an unaware individual the kundalini has her head downward, but in the yogi the head is lifted up as she begins to awaken. When the kundalini serpent wakes up she should rise through sushumna until she is perfectly straight from the tip of her tail, anchored in mooladhara, to the top of the head, which fills the skull. Then there will be all-pervading consciousness which is not limited by any influence or subject to any modification.

Why is hatha yoga necessary for the liberation of energy?

Swami Satyananda: Most people think that hatha yoga is only postures but if you analyze the word hatha yoga, it makes the term very clear. In the physical body these are twin forces,

one solar the other lunar. The solar force, *ha*, is prana and light. The lunar force, *tha*, is the mind and consciousness. In order to bring about an awakening there has to be union between these two forces, and that is called hatha yoga.

In the same way, in tantra, there is Shiva and Shakti. Shiva is consciousness and Shakti is cosmic nature. Shiva is the positive pole of energy and Shakti is the negative. They always stay separate. Shiva is time and Shakti is space. The interaction between time and space is the basis of tantra. In the cosmos, space is the positive pole and time is the negative pole, just as there are positive and negative lines in electricity. When they are separate there is no explosion or sparking. But when the two poles join, there is sparking. In the same way, as long as Shiva and Shakti stay separate time and space remain separate, and there is no creation. When they join together the explosion takes place.

This explosion takes place in the nucleus of matter. Every item of matter has a nucleus. Nuclear energy is called nuclear as the nucleus is the heart of the matter. Now, as this matter explodes, the nucleus is formed. This is the science of hatha yoga. Why do Shiva and Shakti come to a point of union? They unite in ajna chakra, at the top of the spinal cord. In science this location is known as the medulla oblongata. There, union takes place between the two forces and this unity is responsible for spiritual illumination. This is the meaning of hatha yoga. Yoga means union. Hatha means sun and moon, prana and mind, Shiva and Shakti, positive and negative.

Tantra is a process of expansion and liberation of these dual forces. Just as the scientist in his lab breaks the atom and energy is liberated, in the same way, energy is liberated from the mind. That is tantra. Asana, pranayama, mudras and bandhas are necessary processes of revelation in this human laboratory. If a scientist is sitting in a laboratory and there is no electrical line, what can the poor fellow do? If there is no air conditioning or central heating, what can the poor fellow do? In the same way, a tantric is sitting in this lab,

seated in the main control room, watching all the behaviours of the mind, noting down all the reactions of mind in relation to the body. If that person has a bad stomach, or fluctuating blood pressure, or the nervous system is depressed, or the bloodstream is full of toxins, will that experiment succeed? No, the wrong information will come out.

Which tantric practices are included in hatha yoga?

Swami Satyananda: In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, the practices that are taught after the shatkarmas, asanas and pranayamas are intended to awaken sushumna. *Maha mudra* and *maha bheda mudra* are intended to awaken sushumna. Then comes the awakening of kundalini. By this time, everything is properly set. The chakras are clear, the pathways of the nadis are clear, sushumna is clear. Now awakening can take place. A yogi is ready. Now he can handle the experiences. Awakening can be taught by anyone. But what about the experience? People cannot handle emotional experiences. They cannot handle death and birth, love and hatred. Can they handle the higher experiences? If they are prepared, they can.

Another important point in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* is the practice of khechari mudra. Even if one does not know how to meditate or have sufficient willpower, if khechari mudra is practised, after some time a secretion flows into the body, called *amrit*. When it reaches cellular level, the state of mind changes. One begins to feel high. The brain waves alter. Even with the eyes open, one can have experiences. With the eyes closed one can have experiences. Music can be heard internally. The beauty of flowers can be seen in any season, anywhere. The moon can be seen even if there is no moon. And the body becomes quiet. That is also one of the very important aspects that hatha yoga inherited from tantra. In *Hatharatnavali* (2:139) the flow of amrit with the practice of khechari is described:

*Utkallolakalaabhritam cha vimalam dhaaraamritam yah pibet;
Nirdosho hi mrinaalakomalavapuryogee chiranjee vati.*

*Sevante yadi lambikaagramanisham jihvaarasasyandinee;
Sakshaaraakatutinktadugdha sadrisham madhvaajyatulyaathavaa.*

Imbibing the surging streams of nectar one lives long in a body soft like a lotus fibre, and is free from all diseases. If the tip of the tongue constantly touches (the roof of the nasopharyngeal cavity) there is a constant flow of the stream of the juice which tastes saltish, pungent, chilly, like milk, honey or like ghee.

Khechari mudra is a tantric practice. While it is held, concentration is on bhrumadhya and the vision of a shining light. As long as there is a shining light, the breath is retained. When the light begins to diminish, one starts breathing in. This is the secret of the yogis who take samadhi underground.

Another important aspect of hatha yoga that has been inherited from tantra is vajroli and sahajoli. Vajroli relates to men and sahajoli to women. By the practice of vajroli, the production of sperm and testosterone is affected and the semen can be withheld. On account of this, even if the yogi is a householder, he does not have to lose semen.

For women it is sahajoli. The yogini practises sahajoli and withholds and redirects her secretions. This is the principle of preservation, which hatha yoga believes is an important point. Man must preserve his *veerya*, semen, and the woman must preserve her secretions. Abstention from sexual life is not advocated. This is one of the important points that must be understood very clearly. It is a scientific point. It is not that celibacy is out of the question. Celibacy has its own merits, but it is not good for all. It is opposing the very realities and processes of nature. Then what to do? Hatha yoga came up with a suggestion. It is called the principle of preservation. One who is able to master the technology of preservation, is a *brahmachari*.

One can be a brahmachari even if one is married and a householder, if the technology of preservation can be handled. Preservation is important, the act is not important.

If anything wrong happens, that is due to loss, not due to the act. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (3:103) it says:

*Dehasiddhim cha labhate vajrolyabhyaasayogatah;
Ayam punyakaro yogo bhoge bhukte'pi muktidah.*

By the yoga of vajroli practice, perfection of the body fructifies. This auspicious yoga even brings liberation alongside sensual involvement.

This important sloka states a basic concept of tantra that contradicts and shatters puritanical ideas. The very idea that the ultimate experience can unfold through sensual experience is not one that many people in the last few centuries and even earlier have been able to accept.

According to tantra, however, *bhoga* or sensual involvement can be the means to yoga. Sense interaction can lead to higher awareness. We have a physical body and cannot deny its existence. Until one knows the experiences of the senses how can deeper and subtle awareness evolve? Experience is of the mind and not the physical body.

First we have to know what the physical experience is. Then by increasing the subtle perception, the experience can be re-awakened in the mind without involving the physical senses. During the day we see with our eyes but what happens at night when we dream? We are not seeing through the eyes but nevertheless, the mind is experiencing. We are re-experiencing what has been perceived. Therefore, in tantra the physical body is the means to delve deeper into the mind and the reality of existence.

How do hatha yoga and tantra view the path to enlightenment?

Swami Satyananda: Enlightenment of human consciousness has never been interpreted in a religious fashion in the tantric tradition. It has always been known as a physiological possibility which can be induced within the body by certain practices. This is why in the tantric system, as opposed to religious philosophies, purification of the body, its five

elements – earth, water, fire, air and ether – and its pranas and nadis, are considered a prerequisite for enlightenment.

If the body is loaded with toxic elements, if the pranas governing vital physiological functions are disrupted and the autonomic nervous system is in a state of imbalance, and if the five elements or the five chakras are not purified, then enlightenment of that body cannot occur. For the purpose of this purification, a few particular practices or kriyas are indicated in hatha yoga, kriya yoga and tantra.

In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (3:123) the question is asked:

*Dvaasaptatisahasraanaam naadeenaam malashodhane;
Kutah prakshaalanopaayah kundalyabhyasanaadrite.*

What other methods are there to cleanse the 72,000 nadis of dirt besides the practice of arousing kundalini?

This sloka indicates the uniqueness of hatha yoga and tantra as a system of spiritual evolution. Many patriarchal religious scriptures and philosophies have talked about spiritual emancipation and higher life beyond the body, but they invariably create a split between consciousness and matter, between soul and body. They suggest that divinity is to be somehow attained beyond the body but they never affirm that the body itself is the divine experience and manifestation. Tantra insists that the way to higher consciousness is by purifying the body and expanding the awareness of its experiences, rather than denying them. Religions hold that man's body is tainted in its very conception; that along with his body, man has inherited a 'fall' from which his consciousness must be redeemed. From the tantric viewpoint these beliefs lead to suppression, guilt, mental and physical sickness.

Tantra asserts that body and spirit are not two, but one. Consciousness permeates the 72,000 nadis of the body. Enlightenment is to be attained by first removing the blockages and impurities within the nadis through the practices of hatha yoga. Then the nervous system is

capable of sustaining the greater voltage of consciousness which accompanies the arousal and awakening of kundalini shakti.

There may be methods to gain emancipation or deliverance from the body, but why is the body to be rejected? Is human birth innately defiled? Should spiritual awareness begin by struggling with the mind or by purifying the body? This is what spiritual aspirants have to decide. Hatha yoga exists for those who wish to purify consciousness in order to experience health and enlightenment. What other method is there?

This sloka must be carefully understood. Some people will maintain that by adhering to a suitable lifestyle in conjunction with some philosophical ideas or religious beliefs, their body is kept clean and healthy, and therefore, kundalini need not be aroused. They have, however, substituted an ethical lifestyle for a greater spiritual awakening.

The crucial point is that for illumination to occur, consciousness must evolve and the body must be transformed into a more subtle substance altogether. The process commences with shatkarma and proceeds through the work of kundalini shakti within the nervous system. What is the spiritual benefit of dietary and lifestyle regulation? It may be stagnation rather than evolution. Of course, it is good as far as it goes, but where is the impetus for higher consciousness to be found? Without arousing kundalini, the power to transcend within the mundane life is lacking. This type of life is only a facsimile, based on suppression of natural desires.

This is the fundamental difference between a religious, ethical or natural lifestyle, and a lifestyle devoted to the direct experience of illumination. The experience of a greater reality is all important for a yogi, not adherence to beliefs.

ANCIENT EGYPT

What knowledge did the ancient Egyptians have of the chakras?

Swami Satyananda: The ancient Egyptians were fully aware of the chakras but most of their scriptures were destroyed. One of the few remaining manuscripts is called the *Divine Pymander of Hermes Trismegistus*. It contains the teachings of Hermes, the great mystic of Egypt. The sahasrara is referred to as the eighth sphere – the source. From this, in descending order, come the seven rings upon which sit seven governors. These are the chakras with their presiding deities. They represent progressively lower levels of consciousness from the eighth sphere downwards. Each of the rings is associated with a planet of the zodiac which has a specific attribute corresponding to that level of consciousness. The book makes it clear that the path to highest consciousness, called the ‘white light’, lies in climbing or ascending through these spheres.

The book tells the story of how Hermes meets the great dragon Poimandres, the lord of the word, who gives him spiritual instructions. Afterwards, Hermes is so inspired that he declares, “O people of the earth, men born and made of the elements, but with the essence of the divine within you, rise from your sleep, rise from your ignorance. Be thoughtful and understanding. Know that your home is not the earth but the light . . . prepare yourself to climb through the seven rings (chakras) and blend with the eternal light.” It is an interesting manuscript, well worth reading.

Basilides, a great Egyptian gnostic, is said to have coined the word *abraxas*. This seven lettered word signifies the creative power and the seven corresponding planetary angels. That is, the word represents the chakras and their presiding deities.

There is a great deal more relevant symbolism in ancient Egyptian mysticism, even in the little that is known about it.

What is the significance of the caduceus?

Swami Satyananda: Hermes was the ancient Egyptian personification of wisdom. He is also associated with Hermes Trismegistus who is believed to have originated the science of alchemy. Hermes is usually depicted holding a unique rod in one hand, with two wings at the top end and entwined with two serpents. This is called a *caduceus*. This symbol is none other than the ida, pingala and sushumna of yoga. The number of intersections of the two serpents is six. These represent the junction of ida and pingala at each of the six chakras from mooladhara to ajna. The two wings at the top of the caduceus are the exact equivalent of the two lotus petals that symbolize ajna chakra, the highest chakra where ida and pingala merge to become one.

The ancient Egyptian worship of Isis, the gnostic system of abraxas and many other old systems were very concerned with the balance of ida and pingala. This is clear from the surviving symbols of these ancient cults.

ANCIENT GREECE

What did the ancient Greeks know about the chakras?

Swami Satyananda: The number seven was always regarded as a very important number in mystical societies. The Pythagoreans regarded it as the number of spiritual life as man is controlled by the seven celestial spirits. These are the chakras. The Pythagoreans represented the number seven by a geometrical cube, that is, the six surfaces and the mystical seventh point in the centre. The six faces are the chakras and the central point is sahasrara, the core of them all. It is said that the number one lies in the centre of the cube and that it represents the real nature of man. This 'one' is the realization of sahasrara, unity or the totality of all things. Reflect on this and try to understand what it means. If a logical answer is found then discard it, for the meaning is beyond the realm of logic.

Similar symbolism was used by Ptolemy in his so-called concept of the solar system. The ptolemaic scheme of the planetary system has been ridiculed by modern astronomers, for it shows the earth as the centre of the solar system around which all the other planets, including the sun, rotate. But this misses the whole point. Ptolemy was not referring to the material universe. He was interested in the levels of awareness of man and used his planetary scheme as a convenient symbol. His seven planets are the chakras and the centre of his universe, the earth, is the sahasrara. The ptolemaic scheme is really an indication or map of levels of awareness. One has to pass through the different spheres of chakras (planets) to reach the centre of one's being, or sahasrara. The ancients called it the *crystallinum primum*, the crystal heaven.

All the mystical systems depict divinity in human form. In the context of the chakras, it implies that man has the potential to transcend individual limitations. Each and every man and woman is a symbol of something much more. The physical framework is that which is visible, the chakras depict that which is invisible. They are the junction between 'that' and 'this', between the limited and the unlimited.

BUDDHISM

Which Buddhist tradition includes knowledge of prana?

Swami Satyananda: In the religious life of the Buddhist tradition, there are two paths, Mahayana and Hinayana. But their philosophical traditions were fourfold. These are called Madhyamika, Yogachara, Savtrantika and Vebhashika, and they are the four philosophical systems in intellectual Buddhism. Out of these four it is the Yogachara system which talks extensively about prana.

Where does kundalini reside according to Buddhism?

Swami Satyananda: While hatha yoga says that kundalini sleeps in mooladhara chakra, some mind-awakening systems consider that the kundalini resides elsewhere. For

example, Buddhists regard the kundalini as abiding in manipura chakra and that it should be awakened there. There is really no contradiction. It only means that Buddhists don't regard an individual as being on the spiritual path until he has reached the manipura chakra level. Below this level, at mooladhara and swadhisthana chakras, people are considered to be predominantly instinctive, with little awareness and discrimination. This is essentially true, in which case the kundalini, associated with awakening, can indeed be said to abide in manipura chakra. The location of the kundalini depends only on definition.

In the Buddhist system, therefore, sushumna can be considered to begin at manipura chakra. In relation to yoga-tantra practices, however, sushumna is considered as starting at mooladhara chakra.

THE CHINESE TRADITION

What are the links between the ancient Indian and Chinese traditions?

Swami Satyananda: India and China have travelled together in their philosophical quest. About 2,300 years ago Buddhism was taken to China. There was a time when the swamis from India sat in the court of the Chinese Emperor. One such was Acharya Padmasambhava, who took many practices from the Buddhist tradition to China, the most important of which were vipassana and annapanna sati. Both these systems became known as Chu'an in China. Chu'an is a version of dhyana. Later, when it went to Japan, it became Zen.

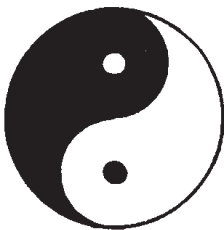
Chinese emperors also used to send travellers like H'uen Sang, Fahi Yan, Yuan Chuan and many more to India to bring back the precious books. These emperors had all the writings of Hindu and Buddhist literature translated into the different dialects of China. Many scholars like Fiyan, Weinsun and Yuang Chung, came to India to study philosophy and yoga. Fiyan in particular took back the pranayama and yoga system.

Knowledge survives according to the culture of the people, so when the concepts of yoga, of prana, of the chakras, of ida and pingala nadis and of pranayama went to China, they were adjusted according to the understanding of the people. So the Chinese have yin and yang, meridians, and acupuncture points. In two thousand years, much change takes place within the same tradition in two different countries. Nevertheless, the systems of pranayama that are taught in yoga, and in China and Japan, are not basically or fundamentally different. The differences we see are not fundamental, they are peripheral.

Is prana the same as ki in the Chinese tradition?

Swami Satyananda: In ancient China the concept of universal energy was prevalent. Instead of prana they called it *ki*. They had a very high and unitive understanding of man and his relationship with the universe. They considered the whole universe to be permeated with energy and that each of us, being intimately linked to the universe, is a powerhouse of energy.

According to the Chinese, the universal energy is comprised of two continually and mutually interacting principles called yin and yang, which create matter and all its transmutations, as well as manipulating all the various forms of energy. The manifested universe was seen as a harmonious whole and subject to change through the ceaseless interplay of the complementary and eternally changing yin and yang. Yin and yang can be considered as the negative and positive forces, the two poles of the manifested whole. The energy or prana of the universe is symbolized by a diagram (in yoga it would be called a yantra or mandala) in which the



yin and yang aspects are depicted as forming the two interdependent and interlocking parts of the whole, each containing within itself the germ or potential of the other. These principles are encompassed or held together by the Tao Consciousness.

How does acupuncture work by manipulating the pranic flow?

Swami Satyananda: The ancient Chinese, unlike modern medical practitioners, did not treat the human body as a collection of separate physical organs. They saw the whole body as a unit and that each part of the body was intimately related to the whole. The Chinese of antiquity knew of the pranic body.

They actually mapped out specific pathways of pranic flow within the physical body. Further, they identified seven hundred or so particular points on the skin which correspond to the position of this flow but which cannot normally be detected. It is within, but not of, the physical body. Needles can be inserted at these specific acupuncture points to somehow manipulate the pranic flow. If there is imbalance in the flow of prana then disease will result. These needles are able to correct the balance of prana in the pranic body and thereby cure or prevent the occurrence of illnesses.

The success of this system of curing diseases depends on the concept of yin and yang. If the yin and yang principles did not correspond to the actual situation regarding energy in the universe and in the human body then acupuncture would be incapable of achieving the good results that it does.

Do the nadis and chakras correspond with the meridians and stimulation points used in acupuncture?

Swami Satyananda: The widely practised system of healing called acupuncture is actually based on the control and manipulation of the chakras. The chakras used, however, are not confined to the principal ones used in yogic practices, but include about seven hundred chakras located throughout the entire body. These chakra points are stimulated by needles on specific areas of the skin surface. This physical stimulation induces changes in the more subtle chakras, which in turn bring about positive changes in the state of health of specific internal organs to which they are connected by subtle pathways. These pathways are called *nadis* in yoga,

keiraku in Japanese terminology and *meridians* in the context of acupuncture.

Stimulation of these chakra points can also bring about psychological changes within an individual. Incorrect stimulation can produce the opposite effect to the healing given by acupuncture, that is, ill health of the body and negative psychological states.

In Russia, they have photographed these chakra points using the special high frequency Kirlian photographic technique. Flows of prana have been clearly seen along specific pathways throughout the entire body structure. These are the meridians of acupuncture. It has been found that these pathways become concentrated at specific points. These points were found to correspond exactly to the acupuncture points discovered by the ancient Chinese seers thousands of years ago through intuition and highly developed sensitivity. The Russians have designed an instrument called a tobiscope which locates all the acupuncture points. The chakras are the subtle underlying centres. The physical points at which they can be stimulated are called *keiketsu* (or *seiketsu*). Besides acupuncture, these keiketsu or pressure points are used by various other Chinese and Japanese systems, including judo where they are called *kyushos*. The term used for prana in acupuncture is ki. This is regarded as having its centre in the *chukan* (manipura), which is exactly the same as yoga. These correlations are not surprising, as the human body is basically the same no matter what colour, race or size. It is only the cultural system that differs.

CHRISTIANITY AND JUDAISM

What is known about the theory that Jesus Christ came to India for spiritual training during the ‘missing years’?

Swami Sivananda: For about fourteen years Jesus spent his life in India and lived like a Hindu or a Buddhist monk. He had burning dispassion and the spirit of renunciation.

In India he assimilated Hindu ideals and principles. Some Christians do not believe in this account of the Lord's missing years. They argue it is not specifically mentioned in the Bible. In matters connected with persons who lived twenty centuries ago, there are bound to be slight divergences of view.

The Old Testament naturally cannot contain any reference to Jesus. In the New Testament the Gospels were written by his disciples after he was enlightened. It is obviously futile to search for a reference about the period preceding this in accounts of his actions written by people who could never have had any knowledge of his earlier days. This was the period during which he travelled in India, receiving initiation from sages and seers. It has been the belief of many historians that at some time during the missing years, Jesus travelled in India. There is nothing untenable in this view, and its acceptance would only strengthen the bonds of love between the East and the West, promoting goodwill between the two hemispheres, which is the mission of the Lord.

What is the importance of yoga as a link between the Eastern and Western worlds?

Swami Satyananda: Throughout history, there have been links between the East and the West. About 1,900 years ago, Christ became the link between East and West. He was from the East, his philosophy was from the East and he and his philosophy were brought to the West, creating a link. And now, yoga is coming from the East to the West.

Centuries ago, people came from the West and colonized the East. That was a link between the West and East. In the last two centuries, technology came from the West to East. That is a link between the West and East.

So, there are two types of links between East and West, and West and East. Religion and yoga from the East, colonies and technology from the West. These links have brought many people together.

Did Christ have knowledge of yoga?

Swami Niranjanananda: Jesus was familiar with the processes of yoga and tantra. People are only slowly realizing the depth of the Christian teachings. They are intermixed with yogic and tantric concepts in such a way that the spiritual dimension of human transformation is pursued by following the path of *bhakti*, devotion, and moral values for the building up of the human character. Jesus was familiar with the teachings of yoga and tantra. He taught yoga and tantra not in the form of asana, pranayama, yoga nidra and meditation, but as a method to know that the higher reality exists within.

Any teaching conveys two ideas: the aim which you have to follow and the process, the method, you can adopt to reach the aim. If you speak of the aim without the process, it is philosophy. If you speak of the process without the aim, it is a system. But when you unite both it becomes *sadhana*, the transformative process. In the teachings of Christ we see the *sadhana*, but he spoke in a very simple language. In his time, people were not travelling around the world with university degrees and diplomas. People then were very innocent and simple. So, Christ spoke to them in their language and inspired them to develop simplicity, innocence, clarity of thought and compassion for others. We need to understand these concepts in relation to our present situation in life. When we try to do this it is *yoga*, the process which leads to union.

Is an understanding of prana evident in the events and symbolism of Christianity?

Swami Satyananda: The answer is emphatically yes, for the principle of prana is a basic aspect of existence. Therefore, it is not surprising that it is widely mentioned in the various cultures and religions of the world. Christ knew pranayama. He must have been a hatha yogi as he brought Lazarus back to life, he cured many people and he walked on water.

In Christianity much significance is given to the wine and bread served during Holy Communion. There is great

symbolic meaning behind this ceremony though few people realize it. This bread is the bread of life and that is exactly what it symbolizes – energy, prana or the life principle of the universe. Wine symbolizes spiritual enlightenment, the intoxicating bliss of all-knowing consciousness. This is why these two items are taken and eaten in the ceremony, their combination representing the unity of the two aspects of existence, namely the union of consciousness with energy. There are many references to prana in the Bible.

In *1 Corinthians* (10:17) it is written: “Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.” Here, however, bread does not mean prana or energy, but means consciousness, and the ‘one body’ refers to prana. In other words the passage can be read as follows: “For we being many (humans) are really one consciousness and one body (of prana or universal energy), for we are all partakers of that one consciousness.” This clearly shows the agreement between yogic, Christian and ancient Indian concepts.

The cross in Christianity has many meanings, but surely one of them implies balance. All opposites are harmonized and equalized at the centre. Furthermore, seen from a yogic perspective, it becomes evident that the cross is very similar to the yogic symbol for ida, pingala and sushumna. The left side of the cross is ida, the right side pingala and the vertical line or post is sushumna. Their meeting point is ajna chakra. The upper line or sushumna continues on to sahasrara (oneness). At the point of intersection in the middle of the cross (ajna) there is no ego. It was on the cross that Christ was crucified, meaning that he lost his sense of ego, which he sacrificed at the centre.

Does the Bible allude to the pranic body?

Swami Satyananda: In the book of *Genesis* in the Bible, mention is made of the tree of good and evil and the tree of life. This is open to many different interpretations but in relation to the yogic understanding, the tree of good and

evil can be seen as the ida and pingala, the tree of life being the sushumna. This is confirmed by the fact that the cult of ancient Persia, the cult of Mithra, had a similar symbol. It is widely suggested that much of the Bible was influenced by this Persian cult, or conversely that the system of Mithra was influenced by the Old Testament.

There is a well-known symbol of Mithra where two snakes – good (*ahura mazda*) and evil (*ahriman*) – face each other and devour the cosmic egg. The egg is in the mouth of each snake. The egg represents perfect harmony at the highest level – sahasrara. These two snakes and the tree of good and evil in the Bible, represent the ida and pingala, the opposing forces or aspects of existence. When the egg is consumed by the ida and pingala snakes, there is perfect fusion in sahasrara, where all opposites are resolved.

The idea of balance is common to every spiritual system. It is symbolized in many different ways.

Is the chakra symbolism present in the Bible?

Swami Satyananda: Is it merely a coincidence that the book of *Genesis* in the Bible says that creation took place in seven days? Or that there are arbitrarily seven days in a week? The chakras are widely mentioned in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament. The descriptions, however, are highly coloured, being hidden in allegory. Many of the stories of the Old Testament are really allusions to the different chakra levels.

In *Genesis* (28:12) it says, “And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it!” Here the ladder is the chakras, one above the other. The lower end rests on the earth, that is, mooladhara chakra, the lowest of the human chakras representing the plane of everyday material life. The top of the ladder reaches the heavens. This means that ascent through the chakras leads to liberation in sahasrara. You climb half the way with open eyes and half the way with closed eyes. That is kriya yoga.

The angels moving up and down the ladder refer to the paths of pravritti and nivritti widely mentioned in the Indian scriptures. The *pravritti marga* is the outward path of creation, greater limitation and individuality, together with a lowering of consciousness. The *nivritti marga* is the path back to the source, associated with the breaking down of individual barriers, limitations and the raising of levels of consciousness. This biblical verse uses few words but conveys a wealth of ideas and implications.

The story of Enoch is not included in the present day form of the Bible, which is a great pity for the story belongs in the Bible and is one of the clearest symbolic descriptions of the ascent through the chakras. One of the best manuscripts on this subject has been discovered in Russia. It is called *The Book of the Secrets of Enoch*. Little is known of its origin except that its present form was written around the beginning of the Christian era.

The story tells of a sage called Enoch who is sometimes identified with the Egyptian mystic Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus, and who raises his consciousness through the different chakras. He ascends through ten heavens, not seven. This is not really a contradiction to the Indian system for there are a number of other chakras widely mentioned in the tantric scriptures which are not commonly used in practices. For example, above the ajna chakra there are a number of additional chakras, such as the soma chakra and the manas chakra, but they are not used in the practical application of yogic techniques such as kriya yoga. Eventually Enoch ascends to 'the throne of the Lord', the sahasrara chakra, located at the tenth heaven.

It is a beautiful symbolic story, which also throws much light on the meaning of parts of the Bible. For example, it gives a much fuller explanation of Adam and Eve which makes the *Genesis* account more comprehensible.

In the New Testament, *Revelation* (1:20), there is a well known verse: "The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand and the seven golden candlesticks – the

seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks which you saw are the seven churches.” The meaning is clear. The seven candlesticks, and the seven churches are chakras. The seven stars are the presiding deities or angels of each chakra, that is, the powers and aspects which are represented by each chakra. In Judaism the symbol of the seven chakras is the *menorah*, which is indeed composed of seven candlesticks.

There is a wealth of symbolic stories in the Bible. Both the Old and New Testaments are ingeniously disguised and symbolized expositions of the process of self-awakening. For example, the *tabernacle* is a symbol of enlightenment which requires seven months to make, that is, enlightenment comes after passing through the chakras.

Are there references to amrit in the Bible?

Swami Satyananda: *Amrit* is symbolized in different ways in all world religions. In the Vedas it is called *soma*, the intoxicating fluid of bliss. In Christianity and Tantra it is symbolized by wine. It is variously called the elixir of life, the nectar of the gods, the nectar of immortality and ambrosia. Many poets have endlessly praised the ‘sweet wine’ that brings unspeakable happiness – they are referring to amrit which comes not from grapes, but from spiritual evolution. In *John* (4:14), Christ said: “But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

The amrit cascades down from the bindu to the vishuddhi chakra which is located in the throat. It is stored in a small chakra called *lalana*, located in the soft palate at the back of the mouth. It is the area which is pressed by the tongue during khechari mudra. This storehouse of amrit can be awakened through yogic practices, including kriya yoga.

When this fluid or substance enters the body it revitalizes every cell and each and every tissue. It is a sort of resurrection. The influences of that nectar are also present in the experiences of Saint John.

How are the chakras depicted in European mysticism?

Swami Satyananda: Many of the ancient mystical systems of Europe referred to man as the microcosmos, the miniature universe. Consciousness was called the macrocosmos, the greater universe. The microcosmos is a reflection of the macrocosmos. To show man's relationship with consciousness the macrocosmos is often shown as being contained within the microcosmos of man's body. That is, the wise mystics depicted the chakras within the human framework. The essence of all the practices of these mystical and pagan societies was to merge the macrocosm with the microcosm. The keys are the chakras. Also, seven is the number of man in numerology. One reason for this could be that the essence of man is represented by the six chakras and sahasrara.

There is a beautiful symbol used by the ancient Kabbalists. It is the double triangle of Solomon in which two interlaced triangles form a hexagon. Incidentally, this is one of the symbols of the anahata chakra. The triangle pointing upwards represents the macrocosmos, the white Jehovah, or the lord of the light. The triangle pointing downwards represents the microcosmos, the black Jehovah, the lord of reflections, or man. This symbolizes the interrelationship and identification of man with consciousness. It is said that seven creative powers or rays emanate from the upper white Jehovah, which is consciousness. These are the different levels of awareness associated with the chakras arising from the fountainhead, the sahasrara. These seven rays diverge from the source, giving rise to the universe of multitudinous names and forms. These divergent rays are converged and brought into focus in man.

In the Middle Ages, Johan Gitchel, a disciple of the great mystic Jacob Boehme, drew and circulated various charts in his *Theosophical Practice* illustrating the different chakras. Hell is depicted as being in the region of the mooladhara chakra – that is, the normal low awareness level. The charts depict the understanding that man has to gradually solve and overcome his problems in order to progressively open up the chakras.

Is yoga compatible with modern Christian institutions?

Swami Niranjanananda: In South America yoga is taught to the priests, nuns and monks of various Christian denominations in their monasteries, convents and schools. In fact, they were the first people who invited Swami Satyananda to South America, and later they sponsored the establishment of the ashram there, run by swamis from Bihar School of Yoga.

They believe that through the practice of yoga they are able to understand their own religion better, and it is to develop a deeper understanding of their religion and philosophy that they practise yoga. If you ask them whether there is any conflict between Christianity and yoga, they will say no. So this is another aspect of yoga, that it is not bound to any particular faith, country or religion but belongs to and is the heritage of humanity.

ISLAM AND SUFISM

Does Islam have symbolism suggesting knowledge of the chakras?

Swami Satyananda: In Islam there is a story that relates directly to the progressive awakening of the chakras. It tells of Mohammed's night journey to heaven in which he passes through the seven heavens into the presence of Allah. It is very similar to the story of Enoch.

Mohammed was awakened one night by the angel Gabriel, who purified the prophet's being by removing and washing his heart. Then Mohammed was conveyed to Jerusalem by a strange creature called an *alborak*, a white animal the same size and shape as a mule, with the head of a woman and the tail of a peacock. In Jerusalem, Mohammed dismounted on Mount Moriah where he started to ascend a golden ladder lowered from heaven.

Accompanied by Gabriel, he then proceeded to pass through the seven heavenly realms (chakras). The gate to each heaven was guarded by one of the patriarchs, to whom

Mohammed paid due respect. These correspond to the presiding deities representing the nature of each chakra.

At the gate of the first heaven (mooladhara) stood Adam, at the second gate (swadhisthana) stood John, at the third gate (manipura), Joseph, at the fourth gate (anahata), Enoch, at the fifth (vishuddhi), Aaron, at the sixth (ajna), Moses, and at the seventh, Abraham, or according to other accounts, Jesus. At this heaven, Mohammed entered the throne of Allah, the sahasrara.

Behind this story, there is much symbology associated with the different guardians of the chakras. The story is an allegory for the awakening of the chakras.

Are Sufi practices close to those of yoga?

Swami Satyananda: Even the sadhana, the practices of the Sufi cult, is very close to yoga. They refer to kundalini, they refer to the raising of consciousness, and there are practices of concentration on a point which are the same. Concentration on the ingoing and outgoing breath in Sufism is the same as in yoga. If their saints were brought together with yoga, the experience would be one of great compatibility.

PRE-COLUMBIAN SOUTH AMERICA AND SCANDINAVIA

What evidence is there that yoga existed outside of India in ancient times?

Swami Niranjanananda: Yoga is not Indian. The ancient civilizations of the world, which modern civilization calls pagan and backward, had the knowledge and wisdom to realize the inner self. This understanding can be seen depicted at San Agustin in Columbia. In Columbia it was established that yoga is a global science and not an Indian science. When I was in Columbia during 1973 and 1974, I did research into the pre-Columbian civilizations, such as the Aztecs, the Mayans and the Incas, to see their practices and discuss their spiritual theories. Through this process

it was realized that these people had a very strong yoga background.

I lived with various Indian tribes and went to their reservations and looked at their literatures and statues and symbols, discovering that many of them represented yogic symbols, yogic postures and yogic ideas. Then the research continued from Guatemala to Mexico, from Ecuador to Peru, Chile to Bolivia, looking at the ancient tribes that lived in these countries. The Chibcha tribe of Indians lived in Columbia and had a very strong yogic base. From this culture there are statues of people in yogic asanas, practising nauli, practising *vyaghrasana*, the tiger pose, practising *śirshasana*, the head stand, practising *padmasana*, the lotus pose. They can be seen in museums and have been carbon-dated to between 555 BC and 1630 AD.

In one of the greatest sanctuaries in Columbia, San Agustín, there are many, many images of yoga. It is an open-air museum covering many acres of land. There are numerous stone carvings depicting symbols, philosophies and concepts of yoga in relation to energy and consciousness, in relation to vitality, the primordial force and creativity, and in relation to the psychic centres that exist in the body.

There are statues depicting many of the traditional yoga postures which are practised today, such as *vajrasana*, the thunderbolt pose, as well as other aspects of hatha yoga not commonly known in the West, including agnisar kriya and nauli. Concentration and meditation practices are also depicted. There are life-sized statues of people – of warriors and of normal people – and on their backs are carved the symbols of the chakras and the kundalini.

There are two memorable statues, both of which have an inverted triangle at the base. In one, the figure of a snake ascends from the inverted triangle to the crown of the head and the serpent's head is on top of the human head. The other image is of a triangle with three lines moving from the base of the spine to the top of the spine, where they merge at the eyebrow centre. This is the concept of kundalini, the

spiritual and mystical component of yoga. There are symbols of kriya yoga, chakra theory and the theory of the nadis depicted on the rocks. In this manner, the entire philosophy of yoga and spiritual life can be seen in the symbols carved in the statues. From these artefacts it can be inferred that the people of this ancient civilization also had the aspiration to discover their connection with the universe and the cosmos. According to carbon dating, these images are up to 1500 years old.

Similar findings were made in Scandinavian countries and also in Egypt and north African countries. Egypt had a very strong yogic and spiritual foundation. The theories of yoga, the practices of yoga and the symbology of yoga, such as the yantras and the mandalas are found in the old traditions of the Scandinavian countries. These combined discoveries lead to the conclusion that once upon a time, yoga was a global culture.

These people presented yoga in statues as they didn't have printing presses. Instead of books they used statues. By the time this imagery was produced they had refined yoga to a very high level, possibly the same level that it is being practised today, otherwise how would it have been possible to think of kundalini, chakras, mantras, the symbols, so that uniformity and a level of excellence in theory and in practice can be maintained? It must have taken a couple of thousand years for yoga to evolve to that point of perfection. So a rough estimate of the beginnings would be about 3,500 years ago. That is a rough guess. It may be more, it may be less.

But nothing remains constant. Due to the ravages of time, political changes, natural calamities, the migration of tribes, the invasions of people on horseback and with guns, much destruction and death took place, and the yogic culture in these countries was suppressed. The understanding and the practice of yoga disappeared from other cultures and civilizations, but was preserved in India.

4

The Pranamaya Kosha

THE PRANIC BODY

What is the connection between hatha yoga and the pranic body?

Swami Sivananda: A hatha yogi gets siddhis by uniting prana and apana and by taking the united prana-apanas through the six chakras to sahasrara at the crown of the head. Do asana, kumbhaka and mudra to shake the kundalini. Then take it to sahasrara through the chakras in the sushumna.

O children of light! Will you not drink, will you not drink, the nectar of immortality? Drink the nectar in sahasrara and live in the immortal abode of Shiva.

What is the pranic body?

Swami Satyananda: If our perception was finely attuned to the pranic body, we would see a light body in which there are thousands of fine, wire-like structures conducting shakti. These wire-like structures are the nadis. *Nadi* is a flow of energy. The *Shiva Samhita* says that altogether there are 350,000 nadis in the body, the *Prapanchasara Tantra* says 300,000 and the *Goraksha Satarka* says 72,000. There are thousands upon thousands of nadis within the superstructure of the gross body and they distribute consciousness and prana to every atom. The presence of impurities, however, impedes the distribution. This is stated in the *Gheranda*

Samhita (5:35), “When the nadis are full of impurities, vayu (prana) does not enter them.”

What is the nature of prana and does it need to be controlled?

Swami Satyananda: It is very difficult to train a wild animal, especially a lion, tiger or elephant, but if from a young age they are given calm and continual training, they will respond to their master’s commands. Control of prana is also a tedious and delicate process which requires alertness, awareness, patience and constancy. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (2:15) it states:

*Yathaa simho gajo vyaaghro bhavedvashyah shanaihshanaih;
Tathaiva sevito vaayuranyathaa hanti saadhakam.*

Just as lions, elephants and tigers are gradually controlled, so the prana is controlled through practice. Otherwise the practitioner is destroyed.

When prana moves through the body freely and sporadically, like a roaming lion or tiger, it does not respond to one’s will. For example, a person may want to sleep at night but his prana makes him active. Or he may have to work but his prana is inactive and he feels sleepy or ill. Therefore, prana has to be controlled so that it acts in accordance with one’s desire and will. The method employed needs to be safe, sure and systematic, just as if a wild and unpredictable beast were being tamed.

If prana is left unrestrained, the eventual result is that the prana is exhausted and sickness and death occur. The life force and physical elements are ‘burnt up’ as energy is expended in mundane and worldly affairs. Prana has to be channelled and redirected so that it is not wasted.

What are the pancha koshas?

Swami Niranjanananda: According to yoga, a human being is capable of experiencing five dimensions of existence, which are called *pancha kosha*, or five sheaths. These are the five

spheres in which a human being lives at any given moment and they range from gross to subtle. The pancha koshas are: i) annamaya kosha, ii) pranamaya kosha, iii) manomaya kosha, iv) vijñanamaya kosha and v) anandamaya kosha.

The first sheath or level of experience is the physical body, or *annamaya kosha*. The word *anna* means food and *maya* means, comprised of. This is the gross level of existence and is referred to as the food sheath due to its dependence on food, water and air. This sheath is also dependent on prana.

The second sheath is *pranamaya kosha*, the energy field of an individual. The level of experience here is more subtle than the physical body, which it pervades and supports. This sheath is supported in turn by the subtler koshas. Together, the physical and pranic bodies constitute the basic human structure, which is referred to as *atmapuri*, the city of the soul. They form the vessel for the experience of the higher bodies.

The pranamaya kosha is the basis for the practices of pranayama and prana vidya. It is also described as the pranic, astral and etheric counterpart of the physical body. It has almost the same shape and dimensions as its flesh and blood vehicle, although it is capable of expansion and contraction. It has been said in the *Taittiriya Upanishad* (*Brahmanandavalli* 2:2):

Tasmaadvaa etasmaadannarasamayaado'ntara aatmaa

praanamayah;

Tenaisha poornah.

Sa vaa esha purushavidha eva;

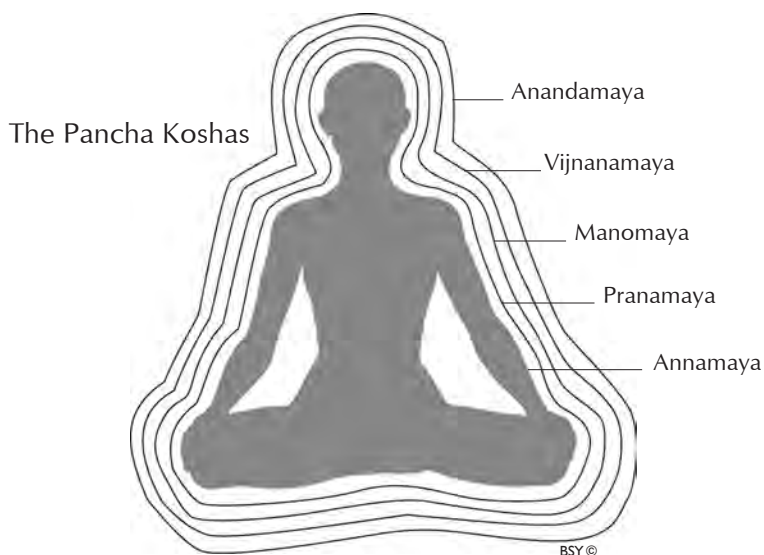
Tasya purushavidhataamanvayam purushavidhah.

Verily, besides this physical body, which is made of the essence of the food, there is another, inner self comprised of vital energy by which this physical self is filled. Just as the fleshly body is in the form a person, accordingly this vital self is in the shape of a person.

Clairvoyants see the pranic body as a coloured, luminous cloud or aura around the body, radiating from within the physical body like the sun flaring from behind the eclipsing moon.

The third sheath is *manomaya kosha*, the mental dimension. The level of experience is the conscious mind, which holds the two grosser koshas, annamaya and pranamaya, together as an integrated whole. It is the bridge between the outer and inner worlds, conveying the experiences and sensations of the external world to the intuitive body, and the influences of the causal and intuitive bodies to the gross body.

The fourth sheath is *vijnanamaya kosha*, the psychic level of experience, which relates to the subconscious and unconscious mind. This sphere pervades manomaya kosha, but is subtler than it. Vijnanamaya kosha is the link between the individual and the universal mind. Inner knowledge comes to the conscious mind from this level. When this sheath is awakened, one begins to experience life at an intuitive level, to see the underlying reality behind outer appearances. This leads to wisdom.



The fifth sheath is *anandamaya kosha*, the level of bliss and beatitude. This is the causal or transcendental body, the abode of the most subtle prana.

What is the role of prana in the five koshas?

Swami Niranjanananda: All the five sheaths are pervaded by prana, which nourishes and sustains them, and maintains their appropriate relationship. The movement from one kosha to another is also achieved with the help of prana.

How prana operates in between the koshas can be understood by the example of a gearshift in a car. One moves in between the gears through the neutral. Neutral is not a gear – the gears are first, second, third, fourth and reverse. Without the neutral space in between, however, one cannot shift from one gear to another. The same principle applies to the koshas.

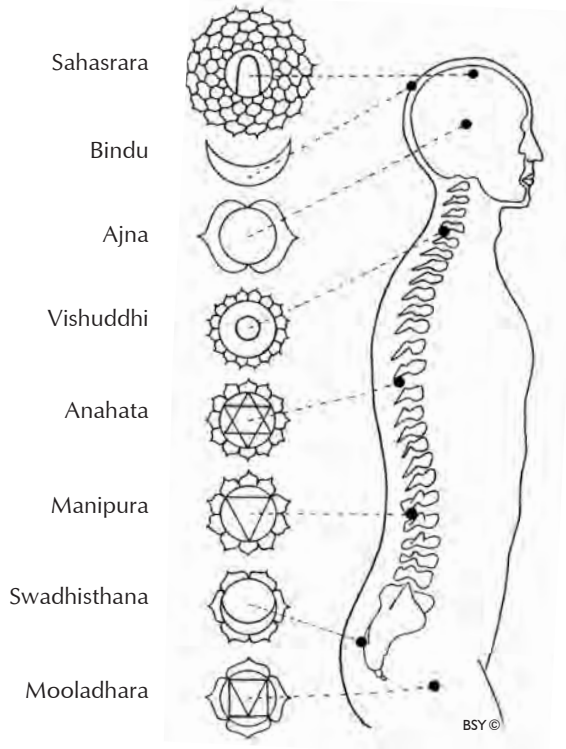
The pranamaya kosha acts as the neutral space, allowing one to move from annamaya to manomaya, manomaya to vijñanamaya, vijñanamaya to anandamaya, and so on. One must use the faculty of prana shakti in order to move from any one state to another. With the activation of prana, one gains access to the physical, mental, psychic and spiritual dimensions.

What does the pranic body consist of?

Swami Niranjanananda: The pranic body is fuelled by the *chakras*, or psychic centres, which are subtle, high-powered vortices of energy in the body. They receive and store the cosmic prana, and act as transformers to step down the level of energy so that it can be used by the different organs and parts of the body. They also act as switches for illuminating the higher faculties and dimensions of consciousness. From the knowledge of these centres the great science of *kundalini yoga*, which is concerned with awakening the chakras, has developed.

The six main chakras located along the spinal column are: mooladhara, swadhisthana, manipura, anahata, vishuddhi

Location of the Chakras



and ajna. Although these centres are situated in the subtle body, they correspond to the nerve plexuses in the gross body. Beyond the six are two other centres of awakening: bindu and sahasrara, whose perception is acquired only at significantly evolved states of consciousness.

Each chakra vibrates at a particular rate and velocity. The chakras at the lowest point of the energy circuit operate at a lower frequency. They are grosser and create grosser states of awareness. Chakras at the top of the circuit operate at a higher frequency and are responsible for higher intelligence and subtler states of awareness. The different systems of yoga, especially *hatha* and *kriya yoga*, systematically purify, rebalance and awaken the chakras individually and also as

a whole. When the chakras are properly prepared by such practices, the pranic level is higher and more stable, and there is little difficulty in awakening and experiencing the transmission of prana.

The prana is carried around the physical body by a vast network of interconnected channels called *nadis*, which form an energy network. The word *nadi* means flow. Nadis are subtle flows of energy. Nadis relate to the energy body and should not be confused with nerves, which relate to the physical body.

Nadis are pathways of pranic, mental and spiritual currents, which form a matrix throughout the physical body. They provide energy to every cell, organ and part, carrying prana back and forth in every direction. Nadis underlie and sustain life and consciousness. In higher states of consciousness the nadis can actually be seen as flows of energy and have been described by the yogis. They can be perceived at the psychic level as distinct channels of light, colour and sound.

Out of the thousands of nadis, seventy-two are considered important. Out of these seventy-two, ten are considered to be major. Among the ten major pranic flows, three are most significant: ida, pingala and sushumna. These three major nadis are situated in the spinal column and pass through every chakra. *Ida nadi* is the mental channel, *pingala nadi* the vital channel and *sushumna nadi* the spiritual channel. Ida, pingala and sushumna are the three main channels for the distribution of energy throughout the entire pranic network. Maximum pranic charges flow through them and they have an instant impact on the entire network – they are the high voltage wires that conduct energy from the substations or chakras along the spinal column to all the other nadis.

These three paths are also known as Ganga (ida), Yamuna (pingala) and Saraswati (sushumna) after the three most important rivers in India, the last being an underground flow. The junction where these three rivers join is called Prayag, located outside Allahabad in northern India. In the

pranic body, they converge at ajna chakra. Pingala is also known as the *surya*, or solar nadi, and ida as the *chandra*, or lunar nadi. These and other names for the nadis are given in *Hatharatnavali* (2:143–144):

*Pingalaa dumbhinee sooryaa yaminaaksharaa tathaa;
Kaalaagnirudree chandee cha te syuh pingalanaamakaah.*

Pingala, Dumbhini, Surya, Yamuna, Akshara, Kalagni, Rudri and Chandi are all names for pingala. (143)

*Idaa chandras shashee vaalee gangaa vaamastu bodhitaa;
Idaayaah vaachakaah shabdaah paryaayena prakeertitaah.*

Ida, Chandra, Shashi, Vali Ganga, Vama are all synonymous words for ida. (144)

Another aspect of the pranamaya kosha is the *pancha pranas*, the five primary forces which operate in the physical body at all times. Thus prana is experienced differently in different parts of the body simultaneously. The seers identified these five pranas as: prana, apana, samana, udana and vyana. The five pranas are also known as the *prana vayus*. The five pranas maintain the balance between the physical and mental levels. Their physical locations are relevant in regard to the functions of the body, however, they function more homogenously in the subtler levels of mind and consciousness, where their distinction is qualitative rather than physical.

Prana is the first of the pancha pranas, also known as *sthoola* (gross) prana. This refers to the energy currents which flow upward from the thoracic region between the diaphragm and the base of the neck. This force maintains the heart and lungs and all the activities in the chest region such as breathing, swallowing and circulation of blood. It is the centre for the circulation of life energy. At the level of mind, prana is responsible for the intake of impressions and ideas. It pervades the region from anahata up to vishuddhi chakra.

Apana is the second prana, which operates in the pelvic region between the navel and the perineum. It sustains the

functions of the kidneys, bladder, bowels, excretory and reproductive organs. Apana is experienced in the form of light particles moving downwards from the navel to the perineum. Swadhisthana and mooladhara chakras are within the range of apana. The kundalini force lies within the periphery of apana, which assists in the awakening of kundalini, while prana helps its upward ascent. At the mental level, apana removes negative thoughts and emotions.

Samana is the third prana. It operates between the navel and the diaphragm. It acts as a balancer or equalizer for the two opposite forces of prana and apana. Samana activates and maintains the digestive organs and is responsible for metabolism. Samana is experienced as a sideways movement of light, like the swinging of a fast pendulum, from right to left and left to right. It is responsible for the manipura experience of vitality and dynamism. Just as it helps digest food, samana is also responsible for digesting the mind-stuff.

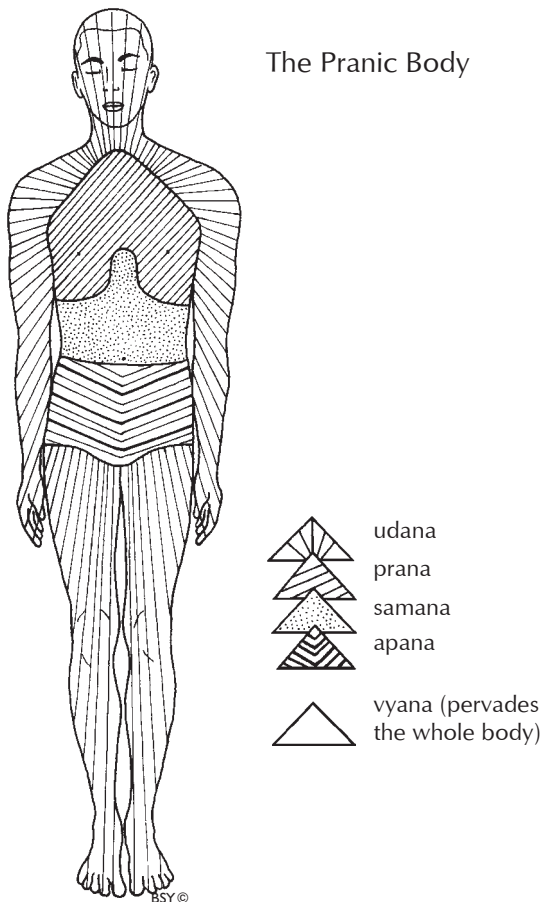
Udana is the fourth manifestation, which operates in the extremities: the arms, legs, neck and head. This prana is responsible for all the sensory organs, *jnanendriyas*, and the organs of action, *karmendriyas*. It coordinates and controls the movements of the legs, arms and neck and directs the activities of the brain and sensory organs that are situated in the head region. All the functions of the throat and mouth are sustained by udana and its influence begins from the region of vishuddhi chakra. It also maintains the pranic link between the heart and the brain, thereby establishing contact between the subtle and causal bodies. Udana is experienced as spiralling flows of light down the arms and legs and up through the head. Udana pervades ajna, bindu and sahasrara chakras.

Vyana, the fifth prana, pervades the whole body and acts as reserve energy. It helps all the other pranas when they require an extra boost. The 'second wind' is the vyana experience. Vyana pervades the spatial element in the body, and is the vehicle of consciousness through the body.

How do one's activities and attitudes affect the pranic body?

Swami Niranjanananda: All beings are composites of prana, which gives them life and existence. The quantum of prana of each individual is indicated by the power of the personality. The *Prashnopanishad* explains that prana springs from the atman and is as inseparable from the self as the shadow of one who casts it.

Often prana is translated as breath. Prana, however, is not the oxygen or the air that one breathes. Prana is the dynamic principle within everything. Everyone is born with a certain



quantum of prana, but the quantity and quality change continuously, as one goes through life. Positive thoughts, higher feelings and yogic practices generate higher levels of prana. A yogi stores an abundance of prana within him, just as batteries store electricity. The megawatts of his prana radiate strength, health and vitality to all around him. He is a powerhouse of energy, providing prana to everyone who comes in contact with him. Swami Sivananda says, “Just as water flows from one vessel to another, prana flows like a steady current from a developed yogi towards weak persons.”

At the material level one also receives prana from the environment, food, water, sun and air. All the elements are comprised of prana. So, the quantum of prana within each individual is influenced by the quality of the elements to which one is exposed and which one ingests in the course of everyday life.

What do the lunar and solar energies represent?

Swami Satyananda: Hatha means lunar and solar energy – it means harmony between mind and prana. It is necessary to understand what these lunar and solar forces in the body are. The lunar energy represents the mind, the consciousness and its functions. The solar energy represents prana, life, temperature, automation, movement. These are the two forms of energy in each individual. They are known as *prana*, the life force, and the mind or *chitta* force, due to which one is conscious. The body is a combination of these two forces. At every point in the body there is life and awareness. There is no point in the body where this is not the case. Life and awareness go together.

Prana means life, heat, mobility, existence. These two energies of life and awareness flow in the physical body through two main channels in the spinal column, known as ida and pingala. Ida means lunar force and pingala means solar force.

The moon means the mental energy of chitta. It is the subtle force which is concerned with the mental layers. The

pranic force is like the sun, dynamic and active. The two create the extremities of introversion and extroversion. It is the practice of hatha yoga which enables the fluctuations between these two energies to become harmonious and unified into one force.

The word energy is used here in the physical sense, this is not about psychic energy, this is about physical energy which scientific instruments can and do register in amps or cycles per second.

How do the practices of hatha yoga relate to the pranic body?

Swami Satyananda: Hatha yoga is one of the most wonderful sciences to be revived by mankind in recent years. The word *yoga* signifies the state of harmony, and the word *hatha* signifies the solar and lunar energies, the two forces that reside in the human body. One is the force of bioenergy, or prana, through which one lives, and the other is the force of consciousness, or chitta, through which one thinks and feels.

These two forms of energy control each and every function in the human body. They are responsible for our mobility, our thinking and our total physical and mental existence. When there is disharmony between them there is disease, restlessness and disturbance, and when there is harmony between them, there is peace and good health. Through the practices of hatha yoga these energies are balanced and regulated, the chakras and the whole body are purified, and a state of union, harmony and peace is achieved.

When prana is flowing in the correct voltage, one feels strong, energetic, enthusiastic, and all the sense faculties are sharp. But when the voltage falls, one feels physically weak and exhausted. When the body is healthy and the nadis allow free flow of prana it is like a well-tuned radio, picking up with perfect clarity the surrounding energies. An unhealthy body is like an old, dilapidated radio. It does not tune in as well as it should to the surrounding energies.

This is the aim of *pranayama* – to tune the body and mind to a high state of sensitivity, so that one picks up these cosmic

energies and so that consciousness can shine through our mind and body in its pristine glory. Unless one has been a regular practitioner of yoga for some time, ida and pingala nadis will not be in communication with sushumna nadi. But when techniques such as trataka and kapalbhati are practised, the three nadis are connected. When this link is established, the higher energy flows through them.

The practices of yoga are designed to awaken, balance and regulate these energies which are within each person. The practices of asana, pranayama, concentration and meditation are all intended to awaken the various nadis and pathways of energy. Within this physical body there are thousands of energy pathways. They are not abstract realities, they are physical realities. These thousands of nadis or pathways are generated from various centres which are known as chakras. There is not a single point in the body that is without the interaction of these two forces.

How does hatha yoga affect the pranamaya kosha?

Swami Satyananda: In the process of awakening kundalini, the sadhaka must not only clear the energy channels (nadis), but also increase the quantity and quality of prana and store it. Prana is accumulated in six main centres along the spinal column. These centres are located in the subtle body and correspond to the nerve plexuses in the physical body. In the subtle body they are known as chakras.

Chakra means a circling motion or wheel. Prana shakti and manas shakti collect in the chakras and form swirling masses of energy. Each chakra is a conjunction point for many nadis. There are numerous chakras in the body but the seven major ones, situated along sushumna nadi, are specifically concerned with human evolution.

At present, as sushumna is dormant, ida and pingala are supplying energy to the whole physical body. The bodily organs and systems are directly connected with ida and pingala. In between the two points where they emanate and terminate – mooladhara and ajna chakras – there are four

junctions, known as swadhisthana chakra in the sacral plexus, manipura chakra, in the solar plexus, anahata chakra, in the cardiac plexus and the fourth one, vishuddhi chakra, is in the cervical plexus.

From these four junctions, the pranic and mental energies branch off to the rest of the body. If the energy flows well, but the junctions do not function properly, the energy cannot be circulated throughout the body. Therefore, ida and pingala should be purified and the four junctions should be put into proper working order through the practices of yoga. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (2:5) Yogi Swatmarama states:

*Shuddhimeti yadaa sarvam naadeechakram malaakulam;
Tadaiva jaayate yogee praanasangrahaane kshamah.*

When all the nadis and chakras which are full of impurities are purified, then the yogi is able to retain prana.

Through hatha yoga these chakras are influenced and stimulated, and blockages are removed. The influence of each chakra can be felt in the body and seen in a person's behaviour. Correct balance of energy in each of the chakras is extremely important.

Dr. Hiroshi Motoyama of Japan devised instruments which can detect the activity of these chakras. He found that depletion of energy and the paranormal functioning of any of the chakras causes imbalance or disease in the associated physical organs and body functions. This is exactly what is stated in the hatha yoga texts.

Purification of the chakras and nadis is the first step to physical and mental health and the awakening of kundalini. Therefore, the chakras and nadis must be strengthened in order to be capable of conducting the kundalini shakti. Yogi Gorakhnath, who was probably the guru of Swatmarama, used to tell his disciples that hatha yoga is the science of the subtle body. It is the means by which the body's energy can be controlled. He said that hatha is the means of controlling

the two main energy channels of the positive and negative currents.

What is the relationship of hatha yoga with ida and pingala nadis?

Swami Satyananda: This physical body and its activities are maintained by two energies respectively known as solar and lunar energy or pranic and mental energy. Therefore, hatha yoga means a system or process of harmonizing the pranic and mental energy. This also implies that there is usually disharmony between the mental and pranic forces in our body. If these two energies could be brought to a point of harmony, something great would occur in this physical structure.

The ida and pingala principles also apply at the pranic and mental levels of being. They represent the two distinct forces within the human environment. In a sense, they represent the positive and negative aspects – the ebb and flow of human existence. They do not only represent two specific psychic passages as is often understood, but rather the total pranic and mental currents.

How does imbalance between ida and pingala nadis cause diseases of body and mind?

Swami Satyananda: Two forces flow into the body through the cables of ida and pingala nadis, like positive and negative currents of electricity. If there is a faulty connection or a short circuit, the energy stops flowing. There is always an imbalance between the two energies – not only in the physical body, but everywhere in nature. This imbalance between the pranic forces and the mental forces, between the solar energy and the lunar energy, is universal.

The practices of hatha yoga are concerned with the balance of ida and pingala, the two interacting forces of prana and mind. When the pranic force predominates and the mental force becomes subservient, there are physical imbalances due to excess prana in the system. On the other hand, if the

mental force is predominant and the pranic force subservient, there are diseases related to the mind. This is the definition of somatopsychic and psychosomatic diseases.

Diseases do not originate only in the mind, they also originate in the body. The body is part of the mind, and the mind is part of the body. Mind and body are not two separate realities. At different stages of manifestation we know them as body and mind, but in essence they are one.

When there is harmony between the mental and pranic functions of the body, yoga becomes swift and smooth. This harmony, however, rarely occurs. In most people, either the solar or the lunar energy predominates.

HATHA YOGA AND PRANA

Why is prana given so much prominence in hatha yoga?

Swami Sivananda: Hatha yogis consider that prana tattwa is superior to manas tattwa (mind), as prana is present even when mind is absent during deep sleep. Hence, prana plays a more vital part than mind. Prana is the overcoat of the mind. If one can control prana, one can control the mind. If the little waves of prana working through the mind can be controlled, the secret of subjugating the universal prana will be known.

The yogi who becomes an expert in the knowledge of this secret will have no fear from any power, as he has mastery over all manifestations of power in the universe. What is commonly known as power of personality is nothing more than the natural capacity of a person to wield his prana. Some people are more powerful in life, more influential and fascinating than others. It is all through this prana, which the yogi uses consciously by the command of his will.

Can hatha yoga balance the disturbances of body and mind?

Swami Sivananda: The basic philosophy of yoga states that the physical body is a composition of two forces, known as the life force and the mental force. These two forces are

always in conflict with each other. There is no harmony, no concord, between the life force and the mental force. Therefore, either the mind is disturbed or the life force is disturbed. If a balance can be created between these two forces, one-pointedness will automatically come. So, the first yoga one should practise is hatha yoga.

These two flows are physical, physiological, material forces which exist within the framework of the spine. This force is then distributed throughout the body, to each and every organ, by thousands and thousands of channels. The purpose of hatha yoga is to purify these channels and make the forces function in complete harmony with each other. When there is disharmony between the mental force and the life force, there is disease. Imbalance between the mental force and the pranic force results in psychic or somatic or psychosomatic diseases.

If the nadis are not flowing freely, there is mental or physical weakness. Due to excessive and useless thinking the nadis are generally weak, impure and incapable of efficiently conducting the pranic and mental shakti to the various organs of the body. So an important function of hatha yoga is purification of the nadis.

These two forces in the spine are responsible for the physical and mental actions everywhere in the body. One feels, touches and tastes. One moves the body, digests, secretes, sneezes, coughs and winks. All these actions and feelings are controlled by the two forces. All the systems of yoga are connected with these two forces. Yoga means connection or union. Therefore, when the two forces are brought together in a state of harmony, it is yoga.

How does purification of the physical and pranic body become the pathway to purification and expansion of mind?

Swami Satyananda: In order to purify the mind, the body as a whole must undergo a process of absolute purification. Hatha yoga is also known as the science of purification.

There are six types of purification. An enema is one type of purification, shankhaprakshalana is another. Purification of the whole nervous system is also part of hatha yoga. As well as purifying the physical body, the nadis must be purified. The body needs to be cleansed in six different ways for six different impurities. When the body is clear of these impurities, the nadis function and the energy blocks are released. When that happens the energies move like wave frequencies along the physical structure of the channel and go right up to the brain.

Therefore, hatha yoga is considered to be preliminary to the practice of tantra, kundalini yoga and kriya yoga. When the rishis discovered the science of hatha yoga they did not have yoga therapy in mind. Although yoga has proved to be very effective in the treatment of many difficult and incurable diseases, the therapeutic effect of yoga is an incidental by-product.

Why is hatha yoga described as a scientific process to aid spiritual upliftment?

Swami Satyananda: Prana, or the life force, is represented by pingala nadi, and the mind, by ida nadi. The path of controlling the prana is a scientific approach to spiritual upliftment. Many teachers feel that hatha yoga is just physical exercises and that it is not spiritual, but actually hatha yoga is a very scientific process. If one wants to raise a building, a foundation is needed as well as a roof and walls. In the same way if one wants to control the prana, the practices of hatha yoga are needed to prepare a base for pranayama.

Pranayama, mudras and bandhas are the most direct ways of exploring the prana and launching the mind into that state of total dissolution. There is a picture of Kali standing on the body of Shiva which illustrates this. *Kali* is the exploded prana shakti and *Shiva* is the individual consciousness. This symbolizes the point when pranas wake up and the individual consciousness is completely dissolved.

What effect does hatha yoga have on the pranic body?

Swami Satyananda: The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, which is an authoritative text on hatha yoga, talks about 72,000 nadis. This means that in the physical body there are 72,000 circuits. They can be called chakras, or points, or meridians, or nadis. They can be called anything, but the system remains a simple circuit, an electrical circuit.

One circuit goes this way, another circuit goes that way, and if there is a problem anywhere a fuse will blow. If there is a short circuit, half of the lights will not be functioning and the person will wonder what is wrong. Why do only some lights work and others don't? A person may feel alright but their knee is in pain – somewhere in the circuit they have blown a fuse.

This is why yoga should not be explained only in terms of modern anatomy and physiology. One should not under-rate or underestimate anatomy and physiology, but the explanations of yoga must be more thorough and more scientific.

Is the body only flesh, bone and marrow, or is an electrical wire only plastic or only copper? No, it's plastic and copper, but within that copper, there flows a force. The body is bone and marrow, it is flesh, blood, mucus, and nerves, but within the physical structure, there is a force. Hatha yoga is concerned with that force. That force can be handled by the yoga postures. Energy blocks, the short circuits, can be removed by the yoga postures.

What does holistic yoga mean?

Swami Niranjanananda: Practising yoga without awareness of the chakras is only physical exercise. When the word yoga is used a holistic perception of one's personality must be developed. In this holistic perception, not only the physical body has to be considered, but also the interaction of the physical energies and organs with the subtle energies that exist within us. This is a very subtle understanding of yoga that needs to be cultivated in order to derive the maximum benefit.

The holistic process is the merger of the mind with the body, the merger of prana shakti with the mind and body. This is *bahiranga yoga*, external yoga. We have all experienced the benefits and effects of *bahiranga yoga* in our lives at one time or another. The management of illnesses, imbalances and diseases and the attainment of health and wellbeing is one aspect. But the real essence of *bahiranga yoga* lies in identifying the different functions of the energies in our system and applying the prana shakti for the fulfilment of the psychic and spiritual objectives that we have set for ourselves. We then move into *antaranga* or inner yoga.

How can hatha yoga practices help conserve and regenerate pranic levels?

Swami Niranjanananda: It is the inability to maintain a state of harmony in the level of prana which makes one feel tired, exhausted and depleted of energy. If one is able to maintain a constant level of prana, no matter how tired the body becomes – it might be panting and sweating, with muscles aching – that person will not collapse with exhaustion. The symptoms of fatigue would be experienced, but recuperation would be very quick. Prana combats the accumulation of various acids, hormones and toxins in the body. The accumulation of lactic acid within the muscles as they get tired, as well as the constant flow of adrenalin, can be corrected and controlled through prana alone.

From the time of waking in the morning until bedtime at night, the body and mind and pranic levels undergo many ups and downs. If that level is somehow able to be increased again, the tiredness, the lethargy, the laziness and the feeling of exhaustion can be overcome, and again the state will be completely awake, alert, tranquil and relaxed, without any after-effect. This type of after-effect is experienced when one does not sleep for a night, and the next morning the feeling is, 'My nerves are shot. I cannot do things properly. I cannot think properly. I am trembling. I am having this experience. I am having that experience.'

When pranayama is practised or the breath is observed or a set of yoga postures is performed, apart from the release of energy and tension from different parts of the body, the various centres known as chakras are influenced. Chakras are centres of energy, vitality or prana. Even in the thumb there are chakras. The practices balance these chakras and the prana is released. The release of this prana is experienced in the form of total balance in the entire personality, body, brain and mind. So it is usually said that the practice of postures and breathing helps to realign and rebalance the physical structure.

What evidence is there that hatha yoga practices increase the body's energy?

Swami Niranjanananda: A group of swamis and doctors in Australia did an experiment with Kirlian photography. Every morning when they woke up they took a print of their hands to see the emission of the electromagnetic energy or prana and noted the colours. Then they went about their normal work. The doctors went to the hospital, the swamis went to teach yoga. There were about six or seven people in the experiment. In the evening, as soon as they returned, they took fresh prints and compared them with the morning prints.

The morning prints showed an emission of 1.8 cm in length, as the people were relaxed. Everybody had slept without tension. At night, however, some people showed no emission at all, as they had given out a lot of energy during the day and accumulated lots of tension. They were mentally, emotionally and physically exhausted.

Now came the most difficult but interesting part. By practising one asana each day, they tried to increase the prana in their system, and then observe through the photos how much increase there was after five minutes of the asana. They selected five asanas and used a different one each day. The next week they tried the same thing with pranayama – five pranayamas, one each day. Then they used mudras

and bandhas: moola bandha, jalandhara bandha, uddiyana bandha plus the corresponding mudra, ashwini mudra, vajroli mudra, agnisar kriya; then yoga nidra, pratyahara, ajapa japa, mantra and breath visualization.

They found that with each practice there was an increase in the quantity of prana and in the emission of prana from various parts of the body, especially from the fingers. There were very noticeable differences before, after and during the experiment. The most important pranayama was *surya bheda pranayama*, right nostril breathing. After five rounds of this, the individuals became as active as in the morning.

Knowing that one is surrounded by the pranic body or field, when emotional and physical tiredness develop, the remaining energy can be used to rejuvenate the energy within the system. When the prana cannot be rejuvenated, one sleeps, or tries to direct the mind. When the prana can be rejuvenated through various yoga practices, the daily stress that affects the performance of body and mind can be prevented.

What are energy blocks and can they be psychological?

Swami Niranjanananda: Think of a magnet attracting metal. If some thick paper is put in front of it, it will still attract metal but not as strongly as before. The greater the barrier in front of the magnet, the less its efficiency. The flow of ida and pingala is something like this. When blocks are removed from these pranic flows – the word ‘toxins’ is not being used here, the word ‘blocks’ is correct – their magnetic power increases.

What are these blocks? Tension is definitely one of them. Emotional problems are another. The state of mind, ‘I want this but I cannot have it,’ and the state of suppression are other blocks. It is removal of these various psychological blocks which increases the quantum of the ida and pingala flows and they, in turn, affect the performance of the mind, intelligence, emotions and behaviour.

Where do energy blocks form in the body?

Swami Satyananda: Energy blocks can form anywhere in the body. Just as there are thousands of meridians, there can be thousands of blocks! Just as there are electrical circuits everywhere, there are junctions everywhere – junctions, junctions, junctions – and if one of the junctions goes wrong, the corresponding line also goes wrong. The energy which is distributed throughout the body by the six chakras has many minor junctions and to clear all the junctions certain asanas, like pawanmuktasana, should be done.

Does hatha yoga remove blockages to the flow of prana in the nadis?

Swami Niranjanananda: Hatha yoga releases potential. The purpose of hatha yoga is to provide physical purity, to eliminate toxins from the body and balance the energies that become suppressed when there is toxicity in the body.

If water flows through a pipe, scales form inside the pipe. In the course of time, those scale formations reduce or stop the flow of water through the pipe. The same thing happens to us when we eat rich or improper food, and scales called cholesterol form in our circulatory system. The blood thickens and the arteries become blocked. The blood cannot flow properly. That is what happens at the physical level.

Something similar also happens at the pranic level. Just as there are arteries and veins in the body, there are also nerves and channels, nadis, which carry energy and stimulation to and from the brain. Hatha yoga removes the blockages so that the flow in the nadis is smooth and unimpeded.

Do asanas clear pranic blockages in preparation for pranayama?

Swami Sivananda: Purification of the nadis is important in the early stages of yoga and is necessary for the serious practice of pranayama. The practice of certain asanas removes obstructions to the free flow of prana through the

nadis and paves the way for the practice of pranayama. *Paschimottanasana*, the back stretching pose, and *halasana*, the plough pose, are particularly effective at enabling the prana to flow through the sushumna nadi.

If there are impurities in the nadis, the ascent of kundalini in sushumna is seriously retarded. The practice of nadi shodhana, or purification of the nadis, is a most effective method of bringing about quick purification.

What happens in the physical and pranic bodies when energy blocks are released?

Swami Satyananda: When the body is cleared of these impurities, the nadis function and the energy blocks are released. With the practice of asanas, the physical structure is harmonized and as blocks are removed, prana begins to flow unhampered in the physical body. When this happens, the energies move like wave frequencies throughout the channels within the physical structure, moving right up to the brain.

The practices of pranayama purify and balance the subtle manifestation of prana in the physical body. At the same time, they activate the pranic energy in our system, thus bringing about a balance in the functioning of body and mind. Through the practice of hatha yoga, the material part of the nadis is purified. Through the practice of pranayama, the energy part of the nadi is purified. Both have to be taken care of.

If this is done well, extra energy circulates in the digestive system, as when the junctions are purified, pathways are created. Therefore, when certain asanas are practised mistakes in the meridians or junction points are actually repaired.

Why is purification and strengthening of the physical and pranic system so important for spiritual awakening?

Swami Satyananda: What are the impurities that need cleansing? They are the waste and residue of sensuous living and desires. Just as excess fats accumulate around

blood vessels and can eventually obstruct the flow of blood, similarly on a pranic level there is also an accumulation of wastes. With the build-up of waste matter, the body's capacity to circulate energy lessens. The body becomes lethargic, the energy level decreases and activation of the chakras and higher brain functions is prevented. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (2:4) it states:

*Malaakulaasu naadeeshu maaruto naiva madhyagah;
Katham syaadunmaneebhaavah kaaryasiddhih katham bhavet.*

The vital air does not pass in the middle channel because the nadis are full of impurities. So how can the state of unmani arise and how can perfection or siddhi come about?

Supposing there is a one litre plastic bottle and inside it some areas are coated with cement. Someone tries to fill it with a litre of nitric acid. Two things will happen. One, the full litre of nitric acid will not fit, and two, the plastic will melt. Similarly, if kundalini shakti is released when the nadis are blocked and weak, you will not be able to handle the experience. Therefore, the whole body and network of nadis need to be purified and the energy channels must be made strong.

The pranic body is the intermediate link between the physical body and the mind. This means it can be approached from either side. It is, however, easier to control and purify the pranic body through the physical body. By strengthening the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, ida and pingala nadis are directly affected, and by developing the central nervous system, sushumna is activated. Therefore, the most important practices of hatha yoga are those which arouse the central nervous system and sushumna.

What are some indications that hatha yoga is working?

Swami Satyananda: Purification of the nadis means the shakti can flow throughout the body unhindered. Just as a light bulb glows with the flow of positive and negative electric

currents, the body emits radiance from the flow of positive and negative shakti. The stronger the flow, the brighter the glow. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (2:19–20) it states:

*Yadaa tu naadeeshuddhih syaattathaa chihnaani baahyatah;
Kaayasya krishataa kaantistadaa jaayeta nishchitam.*

*Yathesh tandhaaranam vaayoranalasya pradeepanam;
Naadaabhivyaktiraarogyam jaayate naadishodhanaat.*

When the nadis are purified there are external symptoms. Success is definite when the body becomes thin and glows. (19)

When one is able to hold the vayu according to one's will, the digestive power increases. With the nadis purified, thus the inner sound or nada awakens and one is free from disease. (20)

According to the *Shiva Sutras*, in the practices of prana yoga, which include pranayama, prana vidya, concentration on prana and pranic centres, purification of nadis and chakras, there are five distinct indications which characterize the awakening of prana. These are: *ananda*, the experience of bliss and delight, *udbhava*, levitation, *kampan*, tremoring, *yoga nidra*, sleep with awareness and *ghurni*, reeling with bliss.

How do the practices of hatha yoga prepare the body to handle greater levels of consciousness?

Swami Satyananda: According to the scriptures, hatha yoga plays a very important part in awakening spiritual energy. Just as in an automobile there must be harmony between the functioning of brakes, accelerator and steering, in the body the different systems must also function in harmony.

The purpose of hatha yoga is to prepare the body and its components to face and to handle a greater evolution of consciousness. Technically, hatha yoga is a process of fusion between the two types of energies of which this body

is composed. This is the definition of the conventional, technical and actual hatha yoga texts.

Prana shakti and *chitta shakti* are both physical energies. *Atma shakti*, the third type of energy, is spiritual. It is non-physical, transcendental, formless energy. Mooladhara chakra produces both the physical and spiritual energy, but the spiritual energy is produced by a larger generator. This energy cannot be conducted by either ida or pingala. For this there exists another line called sushumna which conducts the spiritual energy from mooladhara straight up to sahasrara in order to open the whole brain.

What is the experience when hatha yoga reverses the direction of flow of the different pranas?

Swami Niranjanananda: Prana and apana are the two opposite forces in the physical body. Prana moves upward from the navel and apana downward. Under the influence of apana, the consciousness is drawn down to mooladhara, which is associated with the earth element, the grossest level of manifestation. There it generates desires and interacts with the world. Under the influence of prana, the consciousness is drawn upward towards sahasrara, which is associated with ether, the subtlest element, and with the unmanifest dimension, where it experiences its higher nature.

In the practice of yoga the direction or movement of prana and apana are changed. The upward flow of prana is directed downward and the downward flow of apana is directed upwards. In this way they both move towards one another and meet at samana. At this meeting point the energy of *yogagni*, the fire of yoga, arises. When these two aspects of life, the inner and the outer, the mundane and the spiritual are brought together and united, the kundalini awakens.

In the fourth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sri Krishna instructs Arjuna on raja yoga and hatha yoga. His basic advice is: unite prana with apana or unite apana with prana (4:29):

*Apaane juhvati praanam praane'paanam tathaapare;
Praanaapaanagatee ruddhvaa praanaayaamaparaayanaah.*

Apana is absorbed in prana (by some), and prana in apana by others. By restraining the courses of prana and apana, (the yogi is) wholly occupied in pranayama.

The union of prana and apana, or apana and prana, or the suspension of both, can be attained through the practices of yoga. There are many practices for bringing about this union. When siddhasana is practised and the inspired breath is taken to the region of samana, prana and apana unite there. The practices of kriya yoga bring about the same effect. When the three bandhas are performed, *jalandhara bandha* stops prana from ascending, *moola bandha* stops apana from descending, and *uddiyana bandha* creates a suction process, which affects the behaviour of both prana and apana. A shatkarma like *navli kriya* also creates this union between prana and apana. When pranayama is practised with inhalation, exhalation and retention, the union of prana and apana takes place at ajna chakra.

The union of prana and apana is one of the most important aims of yoga. Until the practitioner is able to channel these two forces, he continues to be under the influence of duality and the mind remains dissipated. The *Yoga Chudamani Upanishad* (v.27) says:

*Aakshipto bhujadandena tathaa yathochchalati kandukah;
Praanaapaapaaasamaakshiptastathaa jeevo na tishthati.*

Just as a ball goes up and down when thrown by the hand, similarly, the individual soul is thrown up (and down) in the same way by the movement of prana and apana (and therefore) does not remain still.

When the opposite activity of the prana is being experienced by the aspirant, the resulting hyperactivity or the increase in the generation of impulses and pranas totally controls the mind and brain function. The body then enters the state of

ecstasy, euphoria, festivity. In this state every cell is dancing and vibrating with joy. Every cell is pulsating with life. This is the physical festival attained through the right practice of asana and pranayama.

AWAKENING SUSHUMNA NADI

Where is sushumna situated within the physical body?

Swami Sivananda: Sushumna is the most important of all the nadis. It is the sustainer of the universe and the path of the universe and the path of salvation. From its base at the back of the anus, it is attached to the spinal column and extends to the *brahmarandhra*, the fontanelle, at the crown of the head. It is invisible and subtle.

Sushumna runs along the centre of the spinal cord or spinal column. Above the genital organs and below the navel is the *kanda*, in the shape of a bird's egg. All the 72,000 nadis arise from it. Of these, 72 are common and generally known. The real work of a yogi starts when sushumna begins to function. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:18) it says:

*Dvaasaptatisahasraani naadeedvaaraani panjare;
Sushumnaa shaambhavee shaktih sheshaastveva nirarthakaah.*

There are 72,000 nadis throughout the cage of this body. Sushumna is the shambhavi, the remaining nadis are unimportant.

What is sushumna nadi?

Swami Satyananda: Sushumna is the carrier, the conductor, of a different energy. It is a high-tension line. When awakening begins in sushumna through sadhana, by the grace of guru or through meditation, a fantastic energy is released which needs a transporter to conduct it from its base in mooladhara chakra to ajna chakra at the top of the spine. That conductor is sushumna nadi.

Sushumna begins to wake up when breath retention with mudra and bandha is practised according to the rules and as

per the instructions of a teacher. Then the path is clear. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (3:3) it says:

*Praanasya shoonyapadavee tadaa raajapathaayate;
Tadaa chittam niraalambam tadaa kaalasya vanchanam.*

Then indeed sushumna becomes the pathway of prana, mind is free of all connections and death is averted.

How important is purifying the nadis in preparation for the ascent of kundalini in sushumna?

Swami Sivananda: *Nadi shuddhi*, or purification of the nadis, is an important matter in the early stage of yoga. If there are impurities in the nadis, the ascent of kundalini in sushumna is seriously retarded. Purity in the nadis facilitates the ascent of kundalini. Pranayama brings about quick purification of the nadis. Nadi shuddhi is the basis of yoga. It is the foundation of yoga. It is the first part of yoga.

How does hatha yoga's effect on the nervous system create the conditions necessary for awakening sushumna nadi?

Swami Satyananda: The main objective of hatha yoga is to create an absolute balance of the interacting activities and processes of the pranic and mental forces. When this balance is created, the impulses generated give an awakening call to sushumna nadi, the central force which is responsible for illuminating the higher centres of human consciousness.

Sushumna nadi is in the central nervous system. If purity, peace, harmony and strength prevail in the nervous system, the psychic centres awaken. Sushumna is a channel, a canal, a nadi, through which this awakened prana shakti flows. Finally it reaches the highest point in the brain. This is the simple explanation of awakening the kundalini in the body.

When a wire is to be connected to the main plug, the connections must be in good condition or else short circuits will occur. In the same way, the body must be purified. It should be free from toxic matter. When the awakening of energy, the awakening of shakti takes place in mooladhara

chakra, how is the shakti going to be conducted to the higher centres of the brain? It is going to be conducted in the same way a wire is connected with the main – this connection is known as yoga.

How does that connection take place? It is said that this particular channel already exists in the human body, but that it is not active, it is not operational. The practices of hatha yoga bring this channel into activity. The most important event before the awakening of kundalini, is the awakening of this channel, which is sushumna. And yet, this is something which has not been explained clearly.

It is mentioned in the books of Swami Sivananda: first awaken sushumna and then kundalini. If one has a good car and no road what can be done? If kundalini is awakened but sushumna is not, which way will the shakti go? It will either pass through pingala or through ida. Pranayama is for the awakening of sushumna. The practices of the major asanas are also for the awakening of sushumna.

In tantric books certain concepts are mentioned. They refer to purity of the chakras and purity of the elements – in other words, *chakra shuddhi*, *bhoota shuddhi* and *nadi shuddhi*. What does it all mean? It means purification of the nadis, purification of the elements in the body and purification of prana. There are seven types of purification in hatha yoga. The seven types of purification in hatha yoga cover the total purification.

Purification of chakras is necessary, otherwise there will be a traffic jam. The chakras must be purified through the practice of asanas. *Bhujangasana*, cobra pose, *shalabhasana*, locust pose and *dhanurasana*, bow pose, all purify manipura chakra. In the same way, there are about twenty-five or thirty yoga postures that are important for the purification of the nadis and the chakras.

When pranayama is practised, instruction is also given for the bandhas. What are the bandhas? They are the locks – to lock the chin, to withdraw the abdomen and to contract the perineum. They should be practised at the same time as hold-

ing the breath. When the breath is held a great change takes place in the level of energy in different spheres of the body.

Therefore, the real purpose of hatha yoga is not to build the body or improve the health, but to energize and awaken the higher centres responsible for the evolution of human consciousness. If hatha yoga is not used for this purpose, its true objective is lost.

What is the most direct way of awakening sushumna?

Swami Niranjanananda: When the two forces of ida and pingala become active, the third channel of sushumna awakens. It is a fact that when two opposing forces are equal and balanced, a third force arises. By bringing positive and negative currents together, machinery can be operated. Similarly, when the body and mind are united, a third force arises. This force is called sushumna, the spiritual energy. Ida is the negative charge, pingala is the positive charge and sushumna is the neutral. While ida and pingala conduct mental and physical energy, sushumna conducts a higher form of cosmic energy. The pranic and mental energies are finite whereas the energy of sushumna is infinite.

When sushumna is active, the breath flows through both nostrils simultaneously. Normally this happens for a few minutes when the breath dominance changes over from one nostril to the other, which usually takes place every ninety minutes. Sushumna flows after practising pranayama, prayer and meditation. When sushumna flows, the whole brain operates, but only half the brain is active during the flow of ida or pingala. At the time of sushumna, both karmendriyas and jnanendriyas, physical organs and mental organs, function simultaneously and one becomes very powerful. Feelings of equanimity and steadiness arise, as sushumna is the conductor of *mahaprana*, the kundalini energy. Meditative states dawn spontaneously, even in the middle of a traffic jam. The flow of sushumna is considered to be the most favourable for any type of sadhana. Sushumna represents the integration and harmony of opposites at all levels.

Human evolution depends on the awakening of prana shakti, as much as it depends on optimum health of the body. All yogic practices purify the pranas, but pranayama is considered the principal among these. The awakening of prana takes place when the nadis flow regularly, rhythmically and continuously and no blockages or physiological discomfort are encountered in the breathing process. This stage is known as *pranotthana*, awakening of the pranas, more specifically of ida and pingala. When the awakening of ida and pingala occurs, sushumna awakens. The awakening of this third force is considered the most important event in pranayama, kriya yoga and kundalini yoga. Pranayama actually begins with the awakening of sushumna, as then the pranic field expands.

How does the practice of hatha yoga lead to the awakening of sushumna nadi?

Swami Satyananda: Sushumna is purified and awakened by the sequential and systematic application of the hatha yoga practices. A consecutive order should be followed, starting with shatkarmas and progressively continuing through to *dharana*, or concentration. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (3:124) it states:

*Iyam tu madhyamaa nadee dridhaabhyaasena yoginaam;
Aasanaḥpraanasamyamamudraabhiḥ saralaa bhavet.*

This middle nadi, sushumna, easily becomes established, (straight) by the yogi's persistent practice of asana, pranayama, mudra and concentration.

With the straightening of sushumna, the yogi's awareness in relation to the flow of energy within the spinal axis becomes established on a more or less continual basis. Straightening the nadi means it becomes functional in the same way that a hose which is entangled and kinked must be disentangled and stretched from end to end in order for water to flow.

What are these kinks and entanglements which obstruct the sushumna passage? In psychological terms, they are the

barriers and blockages within an individual's mental and vital makeup which oppose the uninhibited expression of the greater personality.

Straightening of sushumna is not accomplished without difficulties, and it takes time. Nor is it an easy process, but it is the inevitable outcome of continuing the practices. Establishing 'sushumna awareness' may take months or years, depending upon one's dedication to the practices, and the nature of the deeper karma and samskaras of the aspirant. Once sushumna awareness is functioning twenty-four hours a day, however, it becomes the medium through which the maha shakti awakens and ascends.

For the awakening of sushumna, one's lifestyle and habits must be regulated, as these directly affect the flow of consciousness and prana in the nadis. Extremes of lifestyle disrupt the flow of awareness, and must be sacrificed. The aspirant needs to discover for himself precisely how to do this in relation to his own lifestyle and goals.

Why does hatha yoga emphasize a systematic process for awakening kundalini?

Swami Satyananda: Awakening of kundalini by yoga practices is a systematic, step by step process. The important point here is that when kundalini is awakened, she issues easily from the kanda and proceeds through sushumna with the help of hatha yoga practices.

Only through practice does perfection, or *siddhi*, in asana, pranayama, mudra, bandha and concentration develop. Only when the body posture becomes stable in sushumna does the energy of kundalini issue from the kanda into the chakras. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (3:118), this is described:

*Tena kundalinee tasyaah sushumnaayaa mukham dhruvam;
Jahaati tasmaatpraano'yam sushumnaam vrajati svatah.*

In this way, it is easy for kundalini to issue from the opening of sushumna. Thus the prana proceeds through sushumna of its own accord.

It has always been possible to invoke kundalini by unsystematic, drastic and even tragic means. However, full and sustained awakening never occurs in this way. Herbs, drugs and chemicals, sleep and food deprivation, and even intense and prolonged pain may give some glimpses, but these experiences are never sustained and cannot be directed or controlled. A treasure chamber may be forcibly plundered but by exploding the door to the chamber prematurely and without adequate preparation, the treasure may be damaged or lost forever.

In order to issue forth easily and willingly from the kanda into the chakras, as a permanent source of power and bliss within the aspirant, the sleeping kundalini must be patiently aroused by devotion to daily yogic sadhana. When the total body is purified by the practices of shatkarmas and hatha yoga, when the mind is purified by the practice of mantra, when the pranas are brought under control through the practices of pranayama, and when the diet is pure, at that time, when the yogi is steadfast in his asana, seated in padmasana or siddhasana, the awakening of kundalini takes place without creating any risk, any danger, or any accident.

But there is danger when those who are very much enamoured by the awakening of kundalini take to any practice in a haphazard manner. They do not go through the preliminaries, they do not take care with their diet, do not bother with the practice of shatkarmas and karma yoga. They try to awaken their kundalini and those people have problems as they do not know how to control this fantastic energy. There are people who practise long breath retention, or *kumbhaka*, with moola bandha and uddiyana bandha. Others practise vajroli, sahajoli and amaroli, or concentration on the third eye, austerities, kriya yoga, repeating Gayatri mantra or *om* hundreds of thousands of times, while others take LSD, ganja, heroin and indulge in all sorts of activities in order to experience the absolute. But they are only floundering in the darkness. Time and space or the laws of gravity and mind cannot be transcended unless sushumna, the great mother power in us, wakes up.

In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* the necessity of self-restraint and purification has been repeatedly emphasized by Yogi Swatmarama. This is because the premature attainment of this power in an unpurified body produces unimaginable diseases and, in an unrestrained and unevolved mind, leads to demonic manifestations and insanity. Some of the cruellest figures of history have been empowered by a prematurely awakened kundalini. Self-restraint is the abiding quality of perfection.

How does one know when the union of ida, pingala and sushumna has taken place?

Swami Satyananda: Many people see the blaze as an explosion of light, whereas others experience it as a twilight which slowly increases. This illumination indicates that the union of ida, pingala, and sushumna has taken place, and this is the ultimate purpose of hatha yoga.

When sushumna awakens, there are experiences. There may be fantastic angels as are seen in Christianity, the Hindus call them *deva*. Different sounds, music, colours, ideas, art, poems and literature emerge spontaneously. The brain becomes completely out of control. At this time one must live the life of a sannyasin. Avoid the body and mind, then all these experiences can be streamlined. Otherwise one may be taken to the mental hospital.

How does the merging of ida, pingala and sushumna nadis unite the individual body with the cosmic body?

Swami Satyananda: When we examine the absolute meaning of hatha yoga we see that it is union of sushumna with ida and pingala. At the level of the ajna chakra, ida and pingala merge and become one. This is very symbolic. It represents the stage where the differences between prana and consciousness are broken down. They are experienced as one and the same thing. The principle of ida merges with the principle of pingala to become one.

In other words, it is the macrocosmic pranic force united with the microcosmic spiritual force. Therefore, the practice

of hatha yoga can lead one to the ultimate destination. What is the ultimate destination? Awakening of prana. And what is prana? Prana and kundalini are synonymous terms. Awakening of prana is awakening of kundalini, and in awakening kundalini one is united with the cosmic prana.

It could be said that while ida and pingala conduct earthly energy, the flow of energy in sushumna is of a cosmic nature. Whereas pranic and mental energy are finite, the cosmic energy of sushumna is infinite. Therefore, the major object of hatha yoga is to connect this finite body with that infinite source.

In the awakening of kundalini, the involvement of the body cannot be ignored. When kundalini wakes up its influence spreads all over the body, not only to the brain, affecting other systems such as the circulatory and respiratory systems. Therefore, in the initial stages, hatha yoga should be adopted for purification of the body. This insight gives the understanding that hatha yoga is not physical yoga. It is a higher practice carried out in the physical body. The practice of the six cleansing kriyas, asanas, pranayamas, mudras and bandhas should not be considered as physical yoga.

This awakening occurs in the individual body, but the individual body is part of the cosmic body. As in the macrocosmos, so in the microcosmos. There should be ida, pingala and sushumna in the microcosmos and also in the macrocosmos. There, ida and pingala are known as Shiva and Shakti – they are the cosmic ida and the cosmic pingala, the great ida and the great pingala.

The union of these three should be created by concentrating on ajna chakra with techniques such as *trataka* and *shambhavi mudra*. When the union takes place, an effect is created, just as when a light is switched on, the light is the effect. In the same way, an effect is created by the union of these three nadis. That effect is called *jnana*, higher experience or enlightenment. That effect is the consequence or result of the union. And the union is the result of the *sadhanas* which have been systematically done. This takes place in the individual body and also in the cosmic body.

5

Hatha Yoga in Relation to Other Yogas

THE BRANCHES OF YOGA

What are the different forms of yoga?

Swami Satyananda: There are many different paths of yoga. Most of these paths, however, are only slight variations of a few basic forms of yoga. These numerous variations arise from modifications designed to suit the temperaments and beliefs of everyone, and it can be said that there is a different path of yoga for each individual as each person has a unique personality. People's personalities, however, are more notable for their similarities than differences, as everyone is composed of fundamental characteristics such as emotion and tendency to activity. Due to these common aspects, yoga can be separated into paths which cater for each of these tendencies.

The main paths of yoga are: mantra yoga, kundalini yoga, laya yoga, hatha yoga, raja yoga, Patanjali yoga, bhakti yoga, dhyana yoga, swara yoga, karma yoga, kriya yoga, japa yoga, jnana yoga. The many variations of yoga, however, can be broadly classified into five basic groups. These cater for the most prominent aspects of the personality:

- *Hatha yoga:* the path of balancing the mental, physical and subtle, or *pranic*, forces of the body
- *Raja yoga:* the path of introspection
- *Jnana yoga:* the path of enquiry

- *Karma yoga*: the path of activity
- *Bhakti yoga*: the path of devotion.

Any other forms of yoga can be placed under these five headings.

What system of practices does the word ‘yoga’ actually refer to?

Swami Niranjanananda: The word ‘yoga’ really does not mean anything. It is like saying the word ‘medicine’ which indicates a science, a philosophy, a theory. In the same manner, the word yoga represents a science, a philosophy, a theory. And there are many branches of yoga. Some people excel in hatha yoga practices, some in raja yoga practices, some in other forms of yoga. There are different groups, there are different organizations, there are different teachers who have picked up one component of yoga and have excelled in it. But hatha yoga is not yoga, raja yoga is not yoga, kundalini yoga is not yoga, just as a finger is not a body, an eye is not a body, one ear is not a whole body. All these different parts make up the body. In the same manner, all the different yogas make the subject of yoga complete.

Which branch of yoga does Satyananda Yoga most strongly advocate?

Swami Niranjanananda: Satyananda Yoga is an integrated approach to yoga. It does not highlight one dimension, but incorporates all the different yogas to achieve completeness or wholeness. The system is designed to promote physical health through the classical practices of hatha yoga. Mental stability and wellbeing are promoted through the raja yoga practices of mind management – pratyahara, dharana and dhyana. Psychic blockages are cleared and healthy emotional expression is promoted through mantra and bhakti yoga. Through the classical practices of kriya yoga and kundalini yoga, the practitioner is taken on a journey of self-discovery.

In the new millenium it is more appropriate to talk about self-discovery than self-realization, as realization is a relative

term, whereas the process of self-discovery encompasses the entire human personality.

HATHA YOGA AS THE FOUNDATION

Why is hatha yoga necessary for those who focus on another branch of yoga?

Swami Satyananda: Those who have been practising hatha yoga should now take inspiration. Many times it is said that one should strive for something very high and not merely confine oneself to hatha yoga. It is as though other yogas are superior to hatha yoga. But whichever yoga one practises whether jnana yoga, raja yoga, karma yoga or laya yoga, hatha yoga is the foundation. Whichever yoga one tries to go through, the mistake should never be made of practising it without properly going through hatha yoga.

Hatha yoga provides the foundation for all the higher yogas. It is the one yoga that is down to earth and practical. It talks about the body and the prana. It teaches postures. It balances the nervous and endocrine systems. It purifies and balances the metabolism, anabolism and catabolism.

Yoga is not an abstract science, it is a concrete science. In yoga it is known that one cannot think properly unless the body is purified, the nervous systems are under control, and the pranas are functioning well. At the same time, yoga talks about the mind and the various stages of consciousness, and goes on to teach the most wonderful science of meditation.

What is the place of hatha yoga in the entire scheme of yoga?

Swami Satyananda: Many people believe that the practices of asana and pranayama constitute the whole scheme of yoga, but they do not. They are only the first stage in the acceptance of yoga in one's life. This first stage is very important, however, as there can be no progress in any endeavour without mastering the preliminaries. Furthermore, the so called 'physical' exercises of hatha yoga are not only for the physical body. They are more than that.

Scientific investigations have shown that the regular practice of asana and pranayama influences not only the physical body, but also the mental and vital conditions which, when unbalanced, can lead to psychological diseases. Mental conditions, such as restlessness, anxiety, worry, neurosis and sleeplessness can also be safely cured through the practice of physical postures and breathing exercises. The hatha yoga practices help to rebalance the endocrine glands, such as the adrenals, thyroid and pancreas, and remove their defects. In this way these practices not only cure or correct the physical problems, they also change the imbalanced condition of the mind.

The importance of hatha yoga within the wider yogic system is emphasized in *Hatharatnavali* (1:18):

*Hatham vinaa raajayogo raajayogam vinaa hathah;
Vyaaptissyaadavinaabhootaa shreeraajahathayogayoh.*

Neither can hatha yoga be perfected without raja yoga nor raja yoga without hatha. Hatha yoga and raja yoga are dependent on each other.

How do people living everyday lives know which yoga to practise?

Swami Niranjanananda: Yoga begins with hatha yoga: preparation and purification of the physical body and the pranas. Hatha yoga – the shatkarmas, asanas, pranayamas and pratyahara – belong to the primary education of yoga. Everyone is aware of the body as it is something which is physical, visible, and can be touched, felt, experienced.

When the primary education is passed, a student progresses to the next level, the higher secondary, which would be raja yoga, mantra, dharana, dhyana. This level must also be passed. After the body comes awareness of the mind. The mind is something that cannot be seen, touched or felt, but one can have glimpses of the mind due to the thoughts and desires that come up, and the various mental behaviours that manifest when one encounters these mental

expressions. Then one realizes that there is something beyond the body, and it is known as 'the mind'.

Next, the university level of yoga education would involve combining the components of: karma yoga – yoga of action; bhakti yoga – channelling of emotions; raja yoga – mind management, and jnana yoga – developing wisdom in life. The university level of yoga is where all these yogas merge in one act.

Then come the higher yogas like kundalini yoga and kriya yoga. All the preparation of the body, nadis, senses and brain takes place in hatha yoga. All the mental behaviours are adjusted through raja yoga so that by the time one comes to practise kriya yoga there are no worries about anything which is physical or mental, and the experience of developing kriya yoga can be properly focused on. Kriya yoga's function is not to make a better personality or a better yogi. Rather, it is to give access to the layers of consciousness which have not yet been tapped, or experienced. That is the psychic dimension of the human being. Therefore, a person learns kriya yoga when they have already gone through the processes of hatha yoga and raja yoga, they have had a glimpse of jnana yoga and bhakti yoga, and then, at the end, comes kriya yoga.

Beyond mind, there is another dimension of experience, and that is consciousness. The mind has been experienced, but not the consciousness. Even in the highest states of samadhi, one is pacifying and stilling the mind, but there is no direct cognition of human consciousness. Human consciousness is infinite, it is not confined to time and space, it is just a continuity of existence, it is just a continuity of experience.

With the practices of kriya yoga that point can be reached where one begins to access the dimension of consciousness. The energy, the strength, the force, which we encounter in *that* dimension is used to improve the quality of life in *this* dimension. So, kriya yoga is a practice which stands by itself, and it does not tinker with the personality, or the mental

behaviour, or attitudes, rather it brings about an awakening of the dormant centres of personality.

One can't expect a university degree by only completing primary education. No amount of hatha yoga, no amount of asana and pranayama is going to lead to that destination. Yes, one will feel good, the blocks will be removed, the stiffness will go away, the muscles will become more flexible. However, just because the blocks have gone away and one has become more flexible, does not indicate that the aim will be reached. In fact, people in the circus perform better postures than yoga practitioners. They can perform better asanas than all those who are still trying to touch the nose to the knees after twenty years! So asana is not going to give one darshan of God. Pranayama is not going to give one darshan of God, no.

They have their purpose and once the purpose is over, it is time to move on to the next set of yoga practices. When studying at university, a student does not sit everyday learning how to write, a, b, c and d, no, that phase is finished and done with. At that stage the mind must be applied in different ways. The same thing happens in yoga. Hatha yoga – asana, pranayama, the shatkarmas, the preparation of body and the preparation of mind – represent primary education in yoga. Raja yoga, mind management, represents the higher secondary level of yoga and the other yogas that merge to bring out a creative nature, a creative personality, represent the university training of yoga. In this way one can decide which class to be in, primary, secondary or university.

So how do people find the light to remove the darkness from the mind? Reality is not one, there are many realities, and each aspect of yoga is a stepping stone into another subtle yoga. Once a level has been perfected, then one dimension of a person's nature has been covered, and it is time to move on to another class. The important thing is that one must attain perfection in the previous stage before moving on to the next. Until a stage of yoga has been perfected, it has not been mastered and no matter how hard one tries, the next level cannot be experienced.

BALANCE IN YOGA AND IN LIFE

Are the various branches of yoga separate paths or do they interact?

Swami Satyananda: Actually, it is best to practise all the five main paths of yoga side by side, as a human being is a blending or a combination of body, emotion, psyche and intellect – head, heart and hands, it can be said. If a lopsided path is followed, practising only jnana yoga or hatha yoga or bhakti yoga, and no other yoga, professing that this yoga is supreme, then a great mistake is being made as far as evolution is concerned. One may become an authority on that particular system of yoga, but as far as the development or progress of the inner self is concerned, it will be lopsided.

In order to avoid unbalanced development, it is necessary to make a synthesis, a happy blending, of yoga practices. Man is dynamic by nature. He is also emotional, psychic and rational. Some people are predominantly rational, others are predominantly psychic, emotional or dynamic. The path that is in keeping with the predominant aspect of one's personality should be followed with the most zeal, for it will be in accordance with one's nature. This means that one may be a raja yogi, a bhakti yogi, or a karma yogi, but side by side with this yoga other forms of yoga should also be practised.

Swami Sivananda was a firm believer in what he called 'integral yoga', in which all aspects of the personality are channeled through performing a combination of these different paths. He said that one should serve, love, meditate, realize. These encompass the four different aspects of being: action, devotion, introspection and enquiry.

Some people underestimate yogasanas and others overestimate them; their value needs assessing in relation to the spiritual evolution of humanity. Many believe that yoga means yogasanas only, while yogis and spiritual leaders profess that the physical discipline of yogasana is not at all necessary for self-realization. Both of these views are

extreme, for yogasanas are neither absolutely essential nor are they altogether unnecessary.

A jnana yogi is mistaken if he thinks that he will attain *atma jnana*, knowledge of the self, only through knowledge of the scriptures. In the same way, a raja yogi, who develops only the power of meditation and neglects the body, cannot reach the goal. His sadhana will be interrupted by the illness of the body. A bhakti yogi is always over-confident of his powers of devotion and surrender, and believes that he can compel his deity to bless him with darshan. A hatha yogi believes that, if everything is within, he will extract it through the physical discipline of the voluntary and involuntary systems, the outer and inner organs, muscles, nerves and tissues.

All four of these views are based on inexperience and unauthorized statements. Jnana yoga, bhakti yoga, raja yoga and hatha yoga are not four different paths. They are like four circles interpenetrating and overlapping each other, a part of each circle forms a part of the other three. All these yogas have to be practised together. The right time, the right amount and also the right duration, depth, intensity and emphasis must be understood.

All spiritual seekers, whether they follow the path of bhakti, jnana, raja or hatha yoga, also need to practise yogasanas. Yogasanas are not meant for raja yogis or hatha yogis alone, as people tend to believe. The needs of all human beings are more or less alike. Only little quantitative and qualitative variations are required to suit one's habits and heredity. The yogic ladder must be ascended step by step.

Do the various types of yoga provide practices for balancing specific aspects of life?

Swami Niranjanananda: Sadhana can be classified into three broad categories: physical, mental and psychic. In physical sadhana, there are the practices of hatha yoga, asana and pranayama for the maintenance of health and harmonizing the body. In mental sadhana, there are the practices of

mantra, yantra, pratyahara and dharana, for harmonizing the mind. In psychic sadhana, there are the practices of kriya yoga, kundalini yoga, nada yoga and laya yoga. These are meant to balance the psyche and increase the sensitivity and receptivity, in order to experience the non-mental or transcendental states of consciousness, where the interplay between energy and consciousness is seen.

Whether one is practising asanas for the body or doing other techniques such as karma yoga, the aim of the practice is to be an efficient contributor to human society or to the community. Bhakti yoga is practised to channel the emotions and feelings in the right direction so they can be expressed without social conditionings. Jnana yoga is practised for the purpose of experiencing knowledge practically, not to cram our heads with alien concepts and ideas. Kriya yoga is practised to deepen one's perception of the inner being, so that there is harmony at all levels – physical, subtle, causal and transcendental.

MANY PEOPLE, MANY PATHS

How should one choose which path of yoga to follow?

Swami Satyananda: The practices of yoga are all aimed towards self-mastery. Everyone has a tendency to be introspective and to enquire about the nature of life and other topics that vitally influence life. Simultaneously, everyone has emotional tendencies by nature and is continually performing actions in one form or another. Lastly, everyone has a mind and physical body as well as a pranic body, though few realize the latter aspect of their being.

It is the way that these aspects of consciousness relate to each other that determines one's personality. In other words, some people are more emotional or devotional than others. For these people the path of bhakti yoga is recommended.

Other people can never keep still – they must always be acting and expressing themselves in the outside world. Karma yoga is the main path for these people.

Others are much quieter and more introspective in nature – they tend to watch their mental reactions to life’s situations. Here the way of raja yoga is recommended. In raja yoga, it is the mind which is important.

Still other people have a strong tendency to enquire about the nature of life – in a sense they are stubborn for they refuse to accept any answer unless it is based on personal experience. They should practise jnana yoga.

Then there are those who, perhaps being a bit more down to earth, can relate to tuning up the forces of their mind and body to the best possible condition – in other words, to attain health and calmness of mind. In hatha yoga it is the physical body which is important. These people should practise hatha yoga.

How should one choose a yoga that will help to alleviate one’s particular problems?

Swami Satyananda: If an educated man has a physical problem, he should certainly practise hatha yoga. If an uneducated man has philosophical problems, he should do jnana yoga. It depends on the problem. The sick person asks, “To which doctor should I go – surgeon, ayurvedic, homeopathic, allopathic and so on?” If they have appendicitis, they must go to a surgeon. Likewise, if a man has physical or mental disorders, if his nadis are not functioning in complete harmony, he should first take up the practices of hatha yoga.

How do the gunas influence the type of yoga that should be practised?

Swami Satyananda: Those who are predominantly tamasic in nature should first practise shatkarmas, then asanas and pranayama, then pratyahara and the raja yoga system. Those who are tamasic should not start with yama and niyama, otherwise they will have a lot of problems. So first, hatha yoga. Hatha yoga is for tamasic sadhakas. For rajasic sadhakas, karma yoga is of primary importance and bhakti

yoga is also suitable. Those who are sattwic can practise anything.

What is the best yoga to practise?

Swami Satyananda: All the systems of yoga must be respected. At the same time, one should not lose sight of the purpose of yoga. When talking of transcendental yoga, the higher yoga, one cannot say that hatha yoga is out of the picture. When talking about the higher spirit or the Self, one should not say that sadhana is out of the picture. Suitable forms of yoga have to be given according to the state of evolution and limitations of the mind of the aspirant.

If a person's body is sick, that person doesn't need kriya yoga, even though they may want it. They need hatha yoga. When the mind is like a restless monkey, one needs the help of pranayama and mantra. When one is overly emotional and not able to check the emotions, bhakti yoga is needed. In the same manner, when one wants to discipline one's life and habits, the body and the systems in the body, the answer is raja yoga – ashtanga yoga. But when one wants to analyze the nature of the soul, or the nature of superconsciousness, jnana yoga is best.

THE AIMS AND EFFECTS OF THE YOGAS

What are the aims of kundalini, jnana and hatha yoga?

Swami Sivananda: The kundalini yogi seeks to obtain both *bhukti*, enjoyment, and *mukti*, liberation. He attains liberation in and through the world. Jnana yoga is the path of asceticism and liberation. Kundalini yoga is the path of enjoyment and liberation. The hatha yogi seeks a body which will be as strong as steel, healthy, free from suffering and therefore, long-lived.

Master of the body, the yogi is the master of life and death. His shining form enjoys the vitality of youth. He lives as long as he has the will to live and enjoy in the world of forms. His death is death at will.

What are the aims of the different yogas?

Swami Niranjanananda: What is the aim of hatha yoga? Balance and harmony between the twin forces of prana and chitta, the vital energy and the mental energy. Balance between the solar energy: the vitality, the dynamism, the motion, the activity; and the passive energy, the mental, thinking, rationalizing faculty. The purpose of hatha yoga is to refine the human sentiments and emotions.

What is the aim of bhakti yoga? Emotional management. Just as the aim of raja yoga is mind management, the aim of bhakti yoga is managing one's emotions. What is the aim of kundalini yoga? To access the otherwise inaccessible psychic personality or the psychic nature, and to awaken the dormant psychic potentials. And in this way, each yoga has defined for itself a direction, an aim. The fulfilment and attainment of that aim takes place when one adheres to the yogic practices with the purpose of acquiring the destined aim as defined by the yogas. And that becomes yoga sadhana.

When one does yoga for controlling the mind, to attain mastery over the mind and the mental functions, that is the yoga sadhana of raja yoga. When one practises yoga to harmonize the energies in the body and mind, that becomes the yoga sadhana of hatha yoga. When one makes an attempt to develop objectivity and remain free from the attachments or the results or the outcome of action and reaction, the cultivation of this attitude becomes the object of karma yoga, to develop immunity to the karmas.

How should the techniques in the various branches of yoga be applied to one's life?

Swami Niranjanananda: As practitioners of yoga, it is important to understand the role that each technique has to play in the betterment of one's life – it is not necessary to become obsessed with one thing. One needs to know which aspects of the body, senses, emotions, mind, nature and personality are affected by the practice of hatha yoga, raja yoga, kriya yoga, kundalini yoga and the various other yogas.

The application of these yogas has to be done properly, with wisdom and understanding. One has to apply the practices of yoga knowing both the aim and the effects of each system and each technique.

Each of the yogas has a specific purpose and relates to one specific aspect of our nature. Hatha yoga is for purity of the body, detscaling, removing the toxins. Raja yoga is for management of the mental, psychological and emotional stresses and tensions, and to know the causes that create conflict and confusion. Kriya yoga is to awaken the subtle forces, in order to find the harmony that exists between body, mind and life. Kundalini yoga is to experience the cosmic nature of life, the transformation of consciousness and perception, the transformation of belief systems and structures, so as to allow greater fluidity in expression and greater wisdom in life by awakening consciousness and energy. Bhakti yoga helps us to better understand our emotions and how they can be made more useful, constructive and creative. Karma yoga is being a witness, an observer of our actions and, by understanding our actions, developing immunity from the influences of the actions, or karmas.

Therefore, each branch of yoga has a particular aim, a particular goal which it attains, but they are all part of a greater effort, which is known only as yoga. This greater effort of yoga attempts to provide one with a solid discipline which increases self-confidence, which increases self-awareness. It increases understanding and the process of understanding, it increases or enhances the ability to see the beauty, more than the beastly aspects of life, and to appreciate life and experience that fulfilment in life which is known as realization.

Hatha yoga is only the entry into the vast subject of yoga. Hatha yoga has a particular aim, raja yoga has an aim, kriya yoga has an aim, bhakti yoga has an aim, jnana yoga has one purpose, karma yoga has a purpose and all these purposes together lead to enlightenment of the human personality, and it is that enlightenment which is the final aim of yoga. Yoga should be understood in this perspective.

In what ways do the different yogas seek to control the mind?

Swami Satyananda: Kriya yoga forms a spiritual practice derived from the tantric tradition and is intended for all those who find it extremely difficult to tackle the mind. Raja yoga is the system in which the mind is controlled by the mind and hatha yoga is the system in which the prana is controlled and thereby the mind is controlled.

Mind – that is, *chitta* – and prana, are both interacting. When the mind becomes turbulent, that disturbs the level of prana. In the same way, if the pranas are disturbed, the mind also becomes disturbed. But it is easier to control the prana, and thereby control the mind. For that, one should practise hatha yoga.

What are the therapeutic qualities of the different yogas?

Swami Satyananda: The preliminary basis of every form of yoga is therapeutic. The practice of bhakti yoga treats the schizophrenic tendencies of the mind. The practices of karma yoga treat the suppressions, inhibitions and complexes. The practice of jnana yoga treats the wrong notions of the individual. The practices of hatha yoga treat the disease-prone nadis, prana and the body. The practice of kundalini yoga and kriya yoga treat psychic symptoms. Every form of yoga has a therapeutic quality at the base.

MERGING PATHS

How do the fruits of the main branches of yoga differ?

Swami Sivananda: He who says that bhakti and jnana are different is an ignorant man. He who says that Rama and Shiva are different is a very big fool. Jnana yoga is rooted in discrimination and self-denial, blossoms as knowledge of Brahma and bears the fruit of moksha. Bhakti is rooted in faith and self-surrender, blossoms as intense love and bears the fruit of communion with the Lord in ecstasy. Raja yoga is rooted in yama, and niyama, blossoms as one-pointedness of

mind and bears the fruit of samadhi. Karma yoga is rooted in self-sacrifice, blossoms as purity and expansion of heart and bears the fruit of knowledge of the imperishable. Kundalini yoga is rooted in truth and brahmacharya, blossoms as the grace of the Divine Mother and bears the fruit of union with Lord Shiva. Hatha yoga is rooted in asanas and pranayama, blossoms as restfulness and bears the fruit of perfect health, long life and awakening of kundalini.

For quick success, the various methods should be combined.

How do the practices of the different yogas lead to the same ultimate goal?

Swami Sivananda: A hatha yogi reaches the highest stage by the practice of various mudras, bandhas, asanas and other exercises, a jnani by the practice of shravana, manana and nididhyasana, a karma yogi by selfless works, a bhakta by developing bhakti and self-surrender, and a raja yogi by deep concentration and manipulation of the mind. The goal is the same in all cases but the methods are different.

Concentration and meditation on the primordial energy, *shakti*, is only a modification of jnana yogic sadhana. Concentration and meditation on the different centres of energy belongs to raja yoga. Concentration at the different chakras and nadis and awakening the shakti through physical methods belong to hatha yoga. Concentration and meditation on the *devata*, presiding deity, of the different inner chakras, may be taken as an advanced course in bhakti yoga. By combining the different sadhanas, success is assured.

Do the different yogic paths have the same aim?

Swami Satyananda: The various paths of yoga lead to the same point or source. They are often compared to different rivers which flow into the sea. At first they are completely separate and are known by different names. As the rivers progress, however, they begin to merge with each other until eventually they are totally absorbed in the ocean. The rivers

completely lose their individuality. It is the same with the various yogic paths. At first they have specific characteristics and sometimes even appear to contradict each other, but as one progresses along any one or number of these paths, their separateness disappears. All the paths of yoga incorporate the same aims: physical health, mental peace and higher awareness.

SADHANAS FOR EVOLUTION

How do the different yogas awaken kundalini?

Swami Sivananda: Kundalini can be awakened by the pranayamas, asanas and mudras performed by hatha yogis; by concentration and training of the mind by raja yogis; by devotion and perfect self-surrender by bhaktas; by analytical will by the jnanis; by mantras by the tantrikas; and by the grace of the guru through touch, sight or mere sankalpa. Rousing of kundalini and its union with Shiva at the sahasrara chakra, bring the state of samadhi and mukti. No samadhi is possible without awakening the kundalini.

For a selected few, any one of the above methods is quite sufficient to awaken the kundalini. Many will have to combine different methods. This is according to the growth and position of the sadhakas on the spiritual path. The guru will find out the real position of the sadhaka and will prescribe a proper method that will successfully awaken the kundalini in a short period.

This is something like the doctor prescribing a proper medicine to a patient to cure a particular disease. One kind of medicine will not cure the diseases of different patients. Just so, one kind of sadhana may not suit all.

How do the different yogas help aspirants to acquire siddhis?

Swami Sivananda: A hatha yogi starts his sadhana with body and prana, a raja yogi starts his sadhana with his mind, and a jnana yogi starts his sadhana with *buddhi* or intellect and will.

A hatha yogi gets siddhis by uniting prana and apana and by taking the united prana-apanas through the six chakras to sahasrara at the crown of the head. A raja yogi gets siddhis by *samyama*, the combined practice of dharana, dhyana and samadhi at one time. A jnana yogi exhibits siddhis through pure will or *satsankalpa*. A bhakta gets siddhis through self-surrender and the consequent descent of grace.

Concentration is necessary for all aspirants. Vedantins try to fix the mind on atman. This is their dharana. Hatha yogis and raja yogis concentrate their mind on the six chakras. Bhaktas concentrate on their ishta devata.

How do the different systems of yoga train the sadhaka?

Swami Satyananda: In order to train the physical system there are the practices of hatha yoga. When one practises hatha yoga, one knows exactly what the rules and regulations are. These are the discipline for the hatha yogi as through them one is able to fulfil one's purpose.

In order to train the mind, one has to practise raja yoga, and in order to channel the emotions, bhakti yoga must be practised. The channelling of surplus or unruly emotions is most important, otherwise there will be trouble in the psychic body. In order to train the psychic body, one has to undergo a lot of difficulties. The psychic body is a wild elephant, or an untamed tiger. Being very powerful, it refuses to be tamed. It is the house of all psychic dreams and experiences.

In order to tame this psychic body, the aspirant has to undergo a special type of life. Very few people leading a normal type of life have been able to obtain this psychic power. Just as the emotions are tamed by bhakti yoga, the mind by raja yoga, and the body by hatha yoga, the psychic body is trained by ashram yoga.

Is the diet recommended for hatha yoga applicable to the other yogas?

Swami Satyananda: The science of diet is an independent science which is definitely related to every system of yoga,

but the diet differs from yoga to yoga. The diet in hatha yoga is totally different. For example, if shankhaprakshalana is practised, and one continues to eat red and black peppers, one will definitely suffer. Therefore, the diet regime for a karma yogi, a bhakti yogi, a raja yogi, a hatha yogi and a kriya yogi will not be the same.

What are the signs of transformation in hatha yoga?

Swami Satyananda: When hatha yoga is practised there will be visible changes in one's physical appearance, in the nature of hunger and thirst, in the frequency of urination and evacuation, in the quality or smell of perspiration, in the structure of the body related to the accumulations of fats and other metabolic processes, in the quality of voice, in the quality of thoughts and meditation, and also in the quantity of sleep. When other forms of yoga are practised, such as bhakti, karma and jnana yoga, the indications are different.

How do the different yogas evolve the aspirant?

Swami Niranjanananda: Hatha yoga takes one towards balance and harmony of the two forces, prana shakti and chitta shakti. Raja yoga takes one towards mind and gives the ability to manage the dissipated nature of mind in a better way. Kundalini yoga takes one towards psychic awakening within the personality. Kriya yoga establishes one in an altered state of pure consciousness. In this manner each yoga has a specific aim for which the particular sadhanas are described. Although yoga aims at union, the process of yoga is actualization of the human potential.

Another important aspect of yoga is that the practices, whether of hatha or raja yoga, kriya or kundalini yoga, karma or bhakti yoga, mantra yoga or any other yoga, simply open the doorway to inner experiences. It is that inner experience which then needs to become permanent in life.

How does hatha yoga expand awareness of consciousness compared with other systems of yoga?

Swami Satyananda: Hatha yoga uses prana as the key to expand the awareness of consciousness and realize the self. Some systems of yoga aim at self-realization by purifying and concentrating the mind, others by purifying and channelling the emotions, and some by purifying the intellect and developing wisdom. There are so many ways of redirecting the vital life force from the lower to the higher centres. Hatha yoga achieves it by a means which is most practical for everybody – through the physical body and by working directly on the pranic movements.

How is the relationship between mind and prana experienced in the different yogas?

Swami Satyananda: The most important thing to know about is the mind. When the mind is stopped, the prana is stopped – technique number one. When the prana is stopped, the mind is stopped – technique number two. Three – stop the emotion, and control both the prana and the mind. These are the three ways: raja yoga, hatha yoga and bhakti yoga.

In bhakti marga the emotions are controlled and directed to the higher self. Thereby, both the mind and prana are controlled. In raja yoga, by pratyahara, yama and niyama, and dharana and dhyana, the influence of the mind and consciousness are controlled; thereby the prana is controlled. In hatha yoga one practises pranayama, kumbhaka, moola bandha, jalandhara bandha and uddiyana bandha; the prana is controlled. By controlling the prana, the mind is automatically suspended.

Not one, but all three of these ways must be taken up as one way is never efficient. Therefore, the practices are combined. A synthesized practice of hatha yoga, raja yoga and bhakti yoga must be taken up side by side with other yogas.

Which yogas awaken prana?

Swami Niranjanananda: The practices of raja yoga, hatha yoga and kundalini yoga are the three methods through which prana is awakened and experienced.

Is the ultimate aim of all the yogas to make the mind one-pointed or to awaken sushumna?

Swami Satyananda: No amount of effort or force can ever make the mind one-pointed, so the question becomes how to awaken sushumna, not how to concentrate the mind; one can enter into dhyana and into a state of samadhi through the practices of yoga by first awakening the sushumna nadi. Hatha yoga, the entire system of raja yoga, the philosophy of karma and bhakti yoga, the kriyas of laya and kundalini yoga, and the esoteric science of mantra and japa yoga are directed to only one purpose – the awakening of this third great nadi.



6

The Role of Hatha Yoga in Other Yogas

MANTRA AND BHAKTI YOGA

How can the mind be managed?

Swami Satyananda: When anybody can get into and out of one's mind, it becomes a bungalow for loafers. Sometimes good people come there, but mostly it is full of devils. So let there be a proper occupant for the mind. Otherwise, keep the house locked. Actually, the real occupant is the *atman*, the spiritual force. Mantra is the housekeeper. Hatha yoga is the sweeper, pranayama is the vacuum cleaner and singing kirtan is the paint and polish.

What role does hatha yoga have in bhakti yoga?

Swami Sivananda: Pranayama steadies the mind and removes the tossing of the mind; It is, therefore, a help in developing bhakti. Yoga includes all those processes, physical as well as superphysical, whereby the *vrittis*, or the modifications of the mind, are restrained and the mind is rendered fit to realize the presence of the Supreme. Just as one cannot see the reflection of the sun in the water of a lake when there are waves and the water is in an agitated condition, you can hardly see the self-effulgent God when the mind-lake is in a disturbed condition. Calm the mind. Still the bubbling thoughts. Silence the emotions. You can see God face to face. Yoga is an auxiliary to *upasana*, or worship.

KARMA YOGA

Why is karma yoga important for those who practise hatha yoga?

Swami Satyananda: The significance of karma yoga is usually overlooked by newcomers to yoga and even by people who have been practising other forms of yoga, such as raja yoga and hatha yoga, for many years. The regular practice of yoga techniques for a fixed time every day brings many benefits. Yet one should try to practise yoga throughout the whole day.

This is possible through karma yoga. Asanas, pranayama, meditation and other yoga practices bring wonderful results, experiences and knowledge, but one must relate the inner experiences obtained during these practices to everyday life. It is for this reason that karma yoga must be put into practice to the best of one's ability. In this way, much more will be gained from the more tangible yoga techniques that are practised daily, such as hatha yoga.

Are the practices of hatha yoga and karma yoga mutually beneficial?

Swami Satyananda: Asanas and pranayamas not only help improve meditation techniques, they also help one to perform karma yoga more efficiently. Also, if one achieves even a reasonable flow of concentration during the working day, one's daily practice of asanas, pranayamas and meditation techniques will also undergo a vast improvement. There will be a spontaneous flow of concentration throughout the practice, allowing the benefits to really manifest. This, in itself, is an important reason for trying to practise karma yoga.

The heightened experiences and peace that one comes to know through the daily hatha yoga practices will in turn make it far easier to practise karma yoga. This leads to greater relaxation and concentration in daily activities, which again makes the daily yogic practice program more fruitful. It is a continuously elevating process.

RAJA YOGA

How does raja yoga compare with hatha yoga?

Swami Sivananda: Hatha yoga and raja yoga are inseparable. Hatha yoga is concerned with the physical body and control of the breath. Raja yoga deals with the mind. Raja yoga and hatha yoga are interdependent. Raja yoga and hatha yoga are the necessary counterparts of each other. No one can become a perfect yogi without knowledge of the practice of both these yogas. Raja yoga begins where properly practised hatha yoga ends. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (2:76), it says:

*Hatham vinaa raajayogo raajayogam vinaa hathah;
Na sidhyati tato yugmamaanishpatteh samabhyaset.*

There can be no perfection if hatha yoga is without raja yoga or raja yoga without hatha yoga. Therefore, through practice of both, perfection is attained.

Hatha yoga prepares the student to take up raja yoga. A hatha yogi starts his sadhana with his body and prana, a raja yogi starts his sadhana with his mind. Possess wonderful health through the practice of hatha yoga; then, possessing good health, take to raja yoga.

Does the yogic tradition say that hatha yoga is a preparation for raja yoga?

Swami Satyananda: In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:2), Yogi Swatmarama explains that hatha yoga is to be used as a means of preparing oneself for raja yoga, the supreme state of yoga.

*Pranamya shreegurum naatham svaatmaaraamena yoginaa;
Kevalam raajayogaaya hathavidyopadishyate.*

Prostrating first to the guru, Yogi Swatmarama instructs the knowledge of hatha yoga only for raja yoga, the highest state of yoga.

Through the practices of hatha yoga consciousness can be raised without having to come into a direct confrontation with the mind. Hatha yoga regulates the body secretions, hormones, breath, brainwaves and prana so that the mind automatically becomes harmonious. Hatha yoga is the means and raja yoga is the goal. Hatha yoga is the stairway leading to raja yoga. Once the sadhaka reaches the stage of raja yoga, hatha yoga ceases to be necessary for him. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, it is emphasized that hatha yoga is to be practised for the sole purpose of preparing oneself for the highest state of raja yoga, which is samadhi, while at the commencement of *Gheranda Samhita*, Sage Gheranda offers this prayer:

*Aadishwaraya pranmami tasmai, yenopadishta hathayoga vidhya;
Virajate pranatrajayoga marodumichchhordhirohineeva.*

I bow to the creator, who gave these spiritual instructions regarding knowledge of hatha yoga, which blooms in the form of raja yoga. Knowledge of hatha yoga serves as a ladder for those aspirants who wish to attain that stage.

Why practise hatha yoga before raja yoga and tantra?

Swami Satyananda: To tread any path of yoga, physical, psychic and mental health is essential and these are the basic aims of hatha yoga. In fact, it is often regarded as the first part of raja yoga, for without the preliminary practice of hatha yoga, raja yoga becomes very difficult, if not impossible. In *Shiva Samhita* (5:181) it is written:

*Hatham vinaa raajayogo raajayogam vinaa hathah;
Tasmaatpravartate yogee hathe sadgurumaargatah.*

The hatha yoga cannot be obtained without the raja yoga, nor can the raja yoga be attained without the hatha yoga. Therefore, let the yogi first learn the hatha yoga from the instructions of the wise guru.

By the practice of hatha yoga, the two great forces of prana and mind can be harmonized. They are known as ida and

pingala and they emanate from mooladhara chakra, joining each other in ajna chakra. Their union takes place in the void behind the eyebrow centre and in yoga this place is known as *shoonya*. In hatha yoga we call it *sushumna*. When ida and pingala unite, they activate sushumna; for the purpose of activating sushumna, hatha yoga is practised.

If shoonya is arrived at through hatha yoga, then raja yoga must be practised to experience the consciousness. First of all union must take place, then an experience comes, and one meditates on that point: this is raja yoga. When one meditates on that point what happens? The matter and the consciousness are separated, and the meditator goes in completely: that is tantra. Hatha yoga comes first, raja yoga next, and tantra comes last.

How is hatha yoga a solution to the problem of maintaining mental equilibrium?

Swami Satyananda: There is an important difference between Sage Patanjali's system of raja yoga and the traditional system of hatha yoga. The authors of the hatha yoga texts were very much aware of the difficulty of controlling the fluctuations of the mind. In fact, it is not possible to control the fluctuations of the mind. It may be done for some time, but not all of the time.

So they designed another method. The hatha yoga texts say very clearly that by controlling prana, the mind is automatically controlled. It seems that prana and mind exert an influence on each other. When the pranas are restless, they affect the mind and vice versa. Some people do find it easier to control the mind than to control the prana. Perhaps a few people may succeed, but most people cannot control the mind by the mind. The more they try, the more the split grows.

There is another important point to be noted: sometimes one is inspired, feeling well, feeling one-pointed, but it's not like that every day. Therefore, the authors of hatha yoga struck another theme: "Don't worry about the mind, ignore it. Practise pranayama."

So people should know that there are two ways; each person must choose the most suitable one. The path of controlling the mind is like controlling the wind. The path of hatha yoga is much easier and quicker provided one has a guru, which is, of course, also required in raja yoga.

How do the steps in hatha yoga compare with the steps in Sage Patanjali's raja yoga?

Swami Satyananda: In the raja yoga of Sage Patanjali, there are eight steps: yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and then samadhi. Hatha yoga has different steps – better for the Kali Yuga: neti, dhauti, basti, kapalbhati, trataka, nauli, then asana, pranayama, mudra, bandha, then yama, niyama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi. The order is changed that's all.

The contention of Sage Patanjali is that one must perfect yama and niyama first. Without the perfection of yama and niyama, asana, pranayama and other practices will not give the desired results. What are the yama and niyama? *Yama* means self-control, self-restraint. *Niyama* means fixed rules. In the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali the yamas are truth, non-violence, celibacy, honesty and non-possessiveness. The niyamas are external and internal purity, contentment, austerity, self-observation and surrender to God.

Sage Patanjali was a contemporary of Buddha and therefore it is likely that his system of yoga was influenced by the Buddhist philosophy of yama and niyama. But the authors of hatha yoga are very clear about the order being different. They do not say that yama and niyama form the basis of the system: the authors of the hatha yoga texts were extremely aware of the practical difficulties in relation to yama and niyama. Often one doesn't understand, or can't practise, or doesn't possess enough willpower. Moreover, people think yama and niyama have more to do with religion than with spiritual life.

That is the reason why the texts on hatha yoga do not lay emphasis on yama and niyama. The hatha yogis say the practice of shatkarma comes first in order to purify

the tattwas, the body, the nadis, prana and chakras – the purification of this vessel. Then come asana and pranayama. After this, mudras like vajroli, sahajoli, khechari and shambhavi, vipareeta karani, yoga mudra and others. After practising hatha yoga has lightness of mind and body. In this way, it is possible to go into deep meditation.

Does raja yoga take one beyond the culmination of hatha yoga?

Swami Satyananda: Raja yoga means realization of, or being, Shiva, Brahman, Atma, the Self, Cosmic Consciousness. *Hatha yoga* is the same experience, but from the reflection on the primordial shakti – that is, before nirvana samadhi. In the highest state of raja yoga there is no reflection on shakti: Shiva and Shakti are equipoised. Hatha yoga is the means to experience this, while shakti or *tattwa* is the tool. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:104) it is stated:

*Tattvam beejam hathah kshetramaudaaseenyaṃ jalam tribhiḥ;
Unmanee kalpalatikā sadya eva pravartate.*

Tattwa is the seed, hatha is the soil, total desirelessness (vairagya) is the water. By these three the kalpa vriksha (wish-fulfilling tree) which is the unmani avastha (mindless state) immediately sprouts forth.

According to the sloka, through hatha yoga and absorption of mind and prana, i.e. *laya*, unmani avastha is attained. *Unmani* is the condition when finite mind ceases to function. *Avastha* is a state or condition achieved through effort but it is impermanent. It means that hatha yoga will arouse the condition of unmani but until it becomes an established condition or natural state, you will remain at the level of hatha yoga and not attain raja yoga. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:103) it is stated:

*Sarve hathalayopaayā raajayogasya siddhaye;
Raajayogasamaaroodhah puruṣah kaalavanchakah.*

All the processes of hatha and laya yoga are but the means to attain raja yoga (samadhi). One who attains raja yoga is victorious over time (death).

Hatha yoga culminates with the union of ida, pingala and sushumna in ajna chakra, whereas raja yoga culminates beyond this, when the kundalini reaches sahasrara chakra.

What is the difference between the raja yoga and hatha yoga approaches to meditation?

Swami Satyananda: In raja yoga, one has to fight with the mind. Each and every fluctuation of the mind has to be controlled. By deep concentration, by steady and stable asana, by pranayama, whenever the mind runs away, it must be brought back. Whenever there are fluctuations arising in the mind, one must calm the mind down, by this way or that way: this means controlling the fluctuations of both the pranic force and the mental force.

In hatha yoga it is said that in the spinal column, there are two nadis. *Nadi* means pathway of energy. They flow from the right side and the left side, from the bottom up to the top. At the bottom end is the tailbone, at the top is the medulla oblongata. These nadis flow within the framework of the spine, carrying a certain type of energy and force. They carry two different types of force, and these forces are distributed throughout the body, right and left, making one conscious, making one alive. Ida nadi and pingala nadi are the technical names used for these two forces in yoga. At times the right one is flowing and at other times the left one is flowing: when they flow together, for a period of ten or fifteen or twenty minutes, meditation happens by itself. This is the contention of the hatha yogis.

Does hatha yoga harmonize the pranic body while raja yoga harmonizes the psychic body?

Swami Niranjanananda: In-depth study of the theories of hatha yoga and raja yoga show that they cover more than

just the physical aspect of human nature. They also deal with the subtle aspects of the personality. Hatha yoga aims to harmonize the pranic structure, the flow of pranas within the physiological systems. It harmonizes the body, brain, prana and mind in order to enhance the evolution of these different levels. Raja yoga provides a structure of discipline in the psychic body.

Swami Satyananda clearly taught that, along with an awareness of the external structure, there should also be an in-depth awareness of the subtle psychic structure, so that a proper combination of the qualities of head, heart and hands can take place. It is this combination which starts the quest into spiritual life. This point is often misunderstood.

Has hatha yoga gained more prominence in the modern world than raja yoga?

Swami Niranananda: Generally, around the world, some practices of yoga have been given more prominence. Hatha yoga is considered important by those who wish to be in tune with their bodies: the practices of asana and pranayama are defined as part of hatha yoga. Few people have been exposed to the traditional methods of raja yoga, yet it is one of the most important yogas for people in today's society, as in the system of raja yoga, we find a series of practices which take one from the body to the realization of the inner nature.

How does the hatha yogi develop a positive dharma without focusing on yama and niyama?

Swami Satyananda: When people begin practising yoga and meditation they try their level best to stop the dissipation of energy. The yamas and niyamas are usually recommended for this, but of course not everyone is able to practise them. If everything is expressed in life, the yamas and niyamas will occur naturally. If one tries to develop them by restraint, there is likely to be suppression and this may cause more harm than good. Many people try to practise yamas and

niyamas and they force themselves into a rather rigorous situation.

It is not bad to be truthful and it is not bad to be non-violent, but sometimes one is not able to handle the psycho-emotional situations arising in life through the practice of those dharmas. Therefore, in order to handle this situation, first purify the whole body and the whole group of nadis: that is why hatha yoga involves purification of ida and pingala. When harmony and equilibrium is created between the mental and pranic forces, then these great *dharmas*, these great observances in the raja yoga of Sage Patanjali, become very natural and spontaneous.

The spade work which has to be done in order to make yama and niyama the natural expression of our being is the practice of hatha yoga. Purification of the 72,000 nadis which carry the computerized impulses throughout the body, and the six hatha yoga body purification techniques create a psychobiological harmony, and this harmony creates spontaneity of the positive dharma in us.

One becomes peaceful within and without, not by forcing oneself to be, but on account of the great transformation that has taken place in the structure of the psychobiological system. It becomes one's nature to be non-violent and full of love and understanding. In the same way, one does not have to force the practice of brahmacharya when the body has been purified. The psychological and emotional structure is properly adjusted by balancing the impulses of ida and pingala, so that brahmacharya becomes a spontaneous and natural expression of one's consciousness: it doesn't have to be practised, it becomes one's nature. This is how a positive dharma is developed in the form of yama and niyama through the practice of hatha yoga.

What is the difference between the asanas of raja yoga and hatha yoga?

Swami Sivananda: According to Sage Patanjali, *asana* is that position which is firm and comfortable. He does not lay

any special stress on either asana or pranayama. It was only later on that the hatha yogis developed these two limbs of yoga, and no doubt, they are of tremendous help to the yoga student. While the hatha yogis aim at the control and culture of the body, the raja yogis aim at the control and culture of the mind. And as body and mind are interdependent, physical culture is a sine qua non to mental culture. Therefore in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:67) it says:

*Peethaani kumbhakaashchitraa divyaani karanaani cha;
Sarvaanyapi hathaabhyaase raajayogaphalaavadhih.*

Asanas, various types of khumbaka, and the other various means of illumination should all be practised in the hatha yoga system until success in raja yoga is attained.

Why don't the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali give instructions on asanas and pranayamas?

Swami Niranjanananda: The practice of raja yoga is to be done after hatha yoga. For example, the description of asana in raja yoga is, 'a posture in which the body is still, comfortable and at ease.' In order to come to this understanding and to this level where there is absolute harmony, comfort and ease, one must have gone through some basic preparation which happens through hatha yoga. Even in the description of pranayama, Sage Patanjali stops after saying that pranayama is inhalation, exhalation and retention. This indicates a state of awareness where the practitioner has already attained control over the breathing pattern and the pranic force. He anticipates that the sadhaka has this awareness and skill. He has not described the practices of asana and pranayama as they are described in hatha yoga; the system of raja yoga is practised after hatha yoga.

In the system of hatha yoga one finds the dynamic practices of asana, and in the system of raja yoga we find the static postures. Hatha yoga is the beginning of postures, and raja yoga is the culmination or end result of perfection in posture. In ashtanga yoga, asana and pranayama have

a specific purpose. Even in the traditional texts, asana is defined as a posture in which one can sit for an extended period of time with total comfort and ease. That is the classical definition of asana. There are many kinds of asanas, dynamic and passive. Dynamic postures, which aim at providing absolute control over the functions of the physical body, are described in yogic texts such as the *Gheranda Samhita*, *Shiva Samhita* and *Dattatreya Samhita*.

In the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali, however, the postures which have been defined are meditative: they aid the process of meditation. One sits down to meditate and then concentrates on a symbol, a mantra, the breath, a thought, a vision, an idea, a yantra, a mandala. If one is untrained, however, and if pain occurs in the body or a mosquito bites, concentration is shattered. Practitioners have to learn how to be at peace with the body, so that the distractions of the body and the senses do not affect mental concentration. Asanas are the first step.

Are the concepts of concentration and pranayama different in hatha yoga and in raja yoga?

Swami Sivananda: The practices of concentration and pranayama are interdependent. If pranayama is practised, one will have concentration; if one practises concentration, natural pranayama follows. Sage Patanjali does not lay much stress on the practice of different kinds of pranayama. He mentions, “Exhale slowly, then inhale and retain the breath. You will get a steady and calm mind.” It was only the hatha yogis who developed pranayama as a science and who have mentioned various exercises to suit different persons.

A hatha yogi practises pranayama and then controls the mind. He rises from a lower to a higher level, whereas a raja yogi practises concentration and thus controls prana. He comes down from a higher level. They both meet on a common platform in the end. There are different practices for different temperaments – for some the practice of pranayama is easier to start with, for others the practice of concentration.

How is pranayama different in raja yoga and hatha yoga?

Swami Niranjanananda: *Pranayama* means to regulate the flow of energy throughout the system. *Prana* is energy which manifests and is responsible for the action and motion of the physical organs, and of the mind, in the form of thoughts, feelings, emotions, behaviour, attitudes and inner activity. The *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali define pranayama as the process of inhalation, internal retention and exhalation.

Inhalation means to receive energy, to take in prana; retention means to channel, harmonize and balance that energy; and exhalation means to eliminate or remove the excess energy. Inhalation, retention and exhalation simply represent a process that affects our pranic body, our *pranamaya kosha*. The *Yoga Sutras* do not describe pranayama practices such as nadi shodhana or kapalbhathi as these have been described in other texts, other *samhitas*. Therefore, it should be understood that inhalation, retention and exhalation are not breathing techniques, but activities of energy in relation to one's pranic body.

In both hatha and raja yoga, pranayama comes after asana. The pranayamas in hatha yoga are the same pranayamas that are used in raja yoga but the intricacies of breath, concentration and visualization change from hatha yoga to raja yoga.

For example, the kapalbhathi pranayama in hatha yoga is different to the one in raja yoga. There are two practices of kapalbhathi. One is the raja yoga system and one is the hatha yoga system. In the raja yoga system there is no retention and no bandhas, just strong exhalation, with feeling the effect of the force in the forehead, *kapala*, with the forceful exhalation. In the hatha yoga practice one does maybe twenty such breaths, then inhales deeply and holds while performing the bandhas. If the practice includes breath retention and bandhas it is hatha yoga, if it's just done as breath, it is raja yoga. These are the little details that people don't know, so confusion arises. These are the two different systems, the raja yoga system and the hatha yoga system.

The more specific practices of pranayamas such as *surya bedha*, a pranayama only to awaken and activate the solar nerve, pingala nadi, are unique to hatha yoga. It doesn't come into raja yoga. Practices like chandra bheda are unique to hatha yoga; they don't come into raja yoga.

Therefore, there are pranayamas in hatha yoga and there are pranayamas in raja yoga, some are different, most are the same, and the method of practising changes. In hatha yoga it is more vigorous, using more concentration on the movement of prana and chakras, whereas in raja yoga, it is not so vigorous, it is only a gentle awareness of the pranic movement. Two views: in hatha yoga an activation of prana, and in raja yoga pacifying the pranas, both by using pranayama techniques. The method of practising pranayama changes from hatha yoga to raja yoga.

Is the hatha yoga technique for khechari mudra different to the raja yoga method?

Swami Niranjanananda: The unique nature of hatha yoga becomes fully evident in the practice of mudras and bandhas, although the mudras described in raja yoga are similar to those explained in hatha yoga. The practices of raja yoga, however, are given keeping in mind the normal physical condition of the body, whereas the practices of hatha yoga are carried out by exerting pressure on the body and by changing its physical state. The practice of khechari mudra is an example.

According to hatha yoga, in khechari mudra the tongue is elongated and taken towards the *brahmarandhra*, the subtle opening on top of the head. In order to elongate the tongue, a number of techniques are described. One technique, used if the tongue does not reach inside the nasal cavity, is to sever the frenum beneath the tongue so that the tongue elongates and can be inserted to stimulate the centres there. This hatha yoga technique of khechari mudra is not recommended for anyone needing to live an active life in society. Cutting the frenum makes eating more

difficult and without a special diet the health suffers. It can also make speech indistinct.

In raja yoga, folding the tongue upward and backward so that it lies in contact with the upper palate is called khechari mudra. The modern practice of khechari mudra which is recommended today refers to the raja yoga variation, and is described as *nabho mudra* by Sage Gheranda in *Gheranda Samhita*. *Nabho mudra*, the sky or space mudra, is a simple form of khechari mudra.

As can be seen, the technique adopted in hatha yoga is a hard process involving undue force on the body, whereas in raja yoga simple methods have been prescribed, taking into consideration the physical body and the care that it needs.

LAYA YOGA

What is laya?

Swami Sivananda: *Laya* is the state of mind when one forgets all objects of the senses and becomes absorbed only in the object of meditation. Laya enables one to have perfect control over the five tattwas, the mind and the indriyas. The fluctuations of mind cease. The mind, body and prana are entirely subdued. For laya yoga, shambhavi mudra is an effective method. Trataka plays a vital part in attaining success in laya. Eventually, through the practice of laya yoga, the yogi becomes established in samadhi. He becomes a jivanmukta.

Can laya yoga samadhi be attained through pranayama?

Swami Satyananda: It is through consciousness that prana is controlled and it is through prana that consciousness is controlled. This science is known as laya yoga. There is a branch of hatha yoga, a section of hatha yoga which says that through pranayama complete samadhi can be attained. When pranayama is practised, automatically the mind will be transcended, then the mind dissolves – it disintegrates, there is no mind, there is no ‘I’, there is no duality. In that

state one can sit for one or two or three or four days, and as the body has been purified by hatha yoga there won't be any complications. This is the practice of laya yoga.

In laya yoga there is no need to fight with the mind. There is no need to concentrate on God, the divine, or Rama or Krishna or Christ or Guru. It does not matter if one does, but it is not necessary to fight and wrestle with the mind. Nevertheless, one must practise hatha yoga, the body must be purified of poisons and then one must practise and increase and develop pranayama. But hatha yoga does not mean asanas and pranayamas; it never means that. Hatha yoga has nothing to do with asanas and pranayamas classically. Hatha yoga is the act of bringing about balance between the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems by certain methods. For those who want to practise laya yoga it is very important that they should take up hatha yoga first.

Do hatha yoga and laya yoga both bypass the mind to reach samadhi?

Swami Satyananda: It can be said that laya is the state of disembodied samadhi, which is achieved without any interference with the mind. In laya yoga, as in hatha yoga, there is no direct attempt to influence the mind. The mutual relationship between prana and the mind is recognized and the mind is brought under control by first controlling the prana. For those with very restless minds, this system is far easier to progress through than the other systems such as raja yoga, which lay more stress on controlling the mind. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:29–30) it is written:

*Indriyaanaam mano naatho manonaathastu maarutah;
Maarutasya layo naathah sa layo naadamaashritah.*

Mind is the ruler of the senses, prana is the ruler of the mind. Dissolution (laya) is the lord of the prana and that dissolution is the basis of nada. (29)

*So'yamevaastu mokshaakhyo maastu vaapi mataantare;
Manah praanalaye kashchidaanandah sampravartate.*

This is verily called liberation or moksha. When prana and mind are in laya, indescribable ecstasy is created. (30)

Laya is the absorption of the two polarities: mind and prana, meditator and the object of meditation, the unmanifest shakti and the manifest shakti. There is absorption in the source from which the two have originated. When individual prana and mind are absorbed in their origin there is no conscious, subconscious or unconscious existence. The laya state means absorption in that which exists beyond the causal body, *hiranyagarbha*, the cosmic body. It is the absorption of prana and consciousness in the higher chakras.

Yogi Swatmarama states that the experience of ecstasy created by the process of laya is none other than moksha. Depending on the psychological makeup of the disciple, and on the power of the guru, it can be accomplished without other active effort beyond the absorption of the body and mind into a greater cosmic mind and body.

In the process of controlling the mind it is possible to go on battling with oneself for over one lifetime. Sometimes a split personality is created by the conflicts and struggles which arise during this process. For dynamic people with plenty of ambitions and desires, therefore, the path of hatha yoga is supreme. Here the emphasis is not on controlling the mind, but on controlling the prana. If the aspirant has correctly practised and purified the elements of the body, when kevala kumbhaka occurs, the mind automatically drops.

Why is hatha yoga such an important preparation for laya yoga?

Swami Satyananda: The practices of pranayama, mudra and bandha are indispensable in laya yoga and should be properly learned. In order to perfect these three practices one has to become an adept in hatha yoga. If one is seated in siddhasana, padmasana or any other position, the body

has to be able to remain totally immobile, as in the practice of pranayama the prana moves throughout the body at a terrific speed. The movement of prana at that time must be assisted by maintaining total immobility.

For the state of laya to arise, kevala khumbaka has to take place spontaneously for an extended period, not just for a few seconds. When this happens, the mind automatically becomes absorbed in the point of concentration. All these processes lead into laya or samadhi. This is described in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:31):

*Pranashlashvaasanishvaasah pradhvastavishayagrahah;
Nishcheshto nirvikaarashcha layo jayati yoginaam.*

When inhalation and exhalation are stopped, enjoyment of the senses annihilated, when there is no effort, and a changeless state (of mind) occurs, the yogi attains laya or absorption.

Laya arises where the entire prana of the body is in union with the cosmic prana. Just as in a financial takeover the smaller company and its operations are absorbed by the superstructure of a larger parent company, even while that company still trades under its original name, form and premises, nevertheless the highest management has now been superseded.

When the individual vibrational rate of prana is totally harmonized with the unconditioned cosmic prana there is a merging, but until the individual tattwas of earth, water, fire, air and ether are dissolved, the breath, mind and prana will continue to fluctuate.

When one has practised hatha yoga, one is ready for laya yoga. When there is a complete balance of ida and pingala, which are directly associated with the central nervous system, exactly at that moment one is ready for laya yoga. Otherwise one will fall into nervous imbalance.

Balance, harmony and equilibrium in these two great nervous systems can be brought about by nothing else except

the practice of hatha yoga. But if the practitioner does not practise hatha yoga, if he feels that he can manage without it, then nervous imbalance, either in the sympathetic or the parasympathetic nervous system, will manifest in the practice of laya yoga. Such a person may either become an idiot or become absolutely violent.

KUNDALINI AND KRIYA YOGA

Why is kundalini fundamental to hatha yoga?

Swami Satyananda: The phenomenon of kundalini is the basis of tantra and yoga. *Kundalini yoga* is the process of bringing together the two opposite poles of energy in the body so that they meet in *mooladhara chakra*, the nucleus of matter, and release the inner potential energy, called *kundalini shakti*. *Tantra* is made up of two syllables: *tan*, to expand and *tra*, to liberate. Tantra is the process of expanding consciousness and liberating energy, and is the oldest science known to man. It has been, and still is, practised even among illiterate and so-called uncivilized tribes. Kundalini, the inherent power in every individual, is only just starting to be investigated and accepted by modern science. The ancient rishis, however, understood kundalini and explained it through the scientific and systematic process of tantra. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (3:1) it is written:

*Sashailavanadhaatreenaam yathaadhaaro'hinaayakah;
Sarveshaam yogatantraanaam tathaadhaaro hi kundalee.*

As the serpent (Sheshnaga) upholds the earth and its mountains and woods, so kundalini is the support of all the yoga practices.

Yogi Swatmarama has compared the existence of kundalini to the serpent which upholds the earth. According to Hindu belief, there is a thousand-headed snake wound around the earth, resting on a tortoise and apparently maintaining the earth in its orbit. Of course, this is a symbolic explanation

of the function of the earth's axis, north and south poles and equator. It represents the distribution of cosmic energy in and around the earth. Without this force there could be no earth, no vegetation, no inhabitants. Similarly, every being has a central axis and centre of balance created by the internal energy force. Without kundalini shakti, without prana, there would be no consciousness and no life.

Why is a guru necessary to awaken kundalini?

Swami Satyananda: Yogic-minded people talk about activating chakras and raising kundalini to penetrate the deeper layers of the mind, body and spirit. They may go from one yoga teacher to another and from one form of yoga to another in search of a way, yet they never manage any tangible experience. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (3:2) Yogi Swatmarama says:

*Suptaa guruprasaadena yadaa jaagarti kundalee;
Tadaa sarvaani padmaani bhidyante granthayo'pi cha.*

Indeed, by guru's grace this sleeping kundalini is awakened, then all the lotuses (chakras) and knots (granthis) are opened.

The key word given in this sloka is guru. He is the one who can show the pure essence of life and give the experience of the universal self or *atman*. He is the link to the guru within and the detonator of kundalini.

Only if it is the guru's will can kundalini awaken and ascend through sushumna nadi to illumine the silent areas of the brain. Of course, people have awakened kundalini without a guru, but it has been a disturbing and hazardous affair. Unless all the chakras are opened and sushumna is clear, kundalini should not be awakened, and if it is, it will not reach its final destination in sahasrara. The guru's guidance must be there, otherwise there is no force to raise the consciousness, and psychological blockages will manifest.

For a sadhaka, the greatest problem to tackle is *ahamkara* or ego, and if there is no guru to keep the ego trimmed, it will prove to be an insurmountable barrier. When you live according to guru's will, things that could prove to be obstacles can no longer hinder your spiritual progress.

The guru will ensure that an aspirant is properly prepared before he graces him with an awakening of kundalini, the divine spiritual force. He will guide the sadhaka through all stages of physical, mental, emotional and psychic preparation. The sadhaka must purify the physical and pranic bodies, strengthen the nervous system, harmonize the mind and emotions and develop intuition or a strong link with the inner guru. All the chakras can then be activated within the spinal cord and sushumna will awaken. However, it is up to the guru to decide when the aspirant is ready to cope with the force of kundalini.

People who awaken kundalini without a guru have no direction or aim in life. They do not know how to use and harness the immense quantity of energy that has developed within and they do not understand what is happening to them. They become lost in a maze of meaningless and intense experiences and may end up in a mental hospital classified as lunatics.

If kundalini ascends through ida instead of sushumna, they may have fantastic psychic experiences and become so introverted and withdrawn that they cannot function in the external world. Or if kundalini rises through pingala they may become lost in pranic phenomena and the experiences of the external world. Kundalini can never reach sahasrara without direction from the guru.

Guru may be external or internal, but for most people it is easier to follow the verbal instruction of one who is physically present than to trust any guidance that comes from within. Both the inner guru and the outer guru guide the disciple through *ajna chakra*, the command centre. If kundalini is to travel up to the higher brain centres, ajna must already be functioning.

Mooladhara is the negative energy pole and ajna is the positive. If the negative pole is awakened, the positive pole must also be awakened to create the force of attraction. It is the law of nature that energy of the negative pole is attracted to the positive. Therefore, when ajna awakens, the energy which resides in mooladhara will be drawn towards it.

This same principle of attraction exists between the guru and disciple. The disciple represents the negative pole of energy and guru is the positive. An aspirant may have a keen desire for transcendental knowledge, but it is only on finding a guru that one can move towards the higher experience. One will be drawn closer and closer to the guru internally, and thereby the guru can help remove internal blockages. The guru's instructions, however, must be followed implicitly. The disciple must be like a patient under anaesthesia in an operating theatre and let the guru be the surgeon. The patient who screams and runs away in terror can never be helped. Likewise, a disciple has to be subservient to the guru's commands and his actions must be in accordance with the guru's will.

How important is hatha yoga as a preliminary practice to kundalini yoga?

Swami Satyananda: There is only one way to learn to manifest this unconscious body, and that is through the practice of kundalini yoga. This yoga is concerned with awakening the latent power or energy which lies in mooladhara chakra, which is found in the plexus at the bottom of the spine. When this power is awakened, it is symbolized by a snake rising up the psychic passage, the spinal cord. It is believed that the awakening of this energy from mooladhara is the awakening of the unconscious in an individual at the moment the force rises in the spinal cord, the individual is completely cut off from all forms of awareness.

This is, however, a very difficult thing to do. The spiritual aspirant needs an expert to guide him through that difficult passage. It is essential to have a guide for this reason. When

the individual awareness passes through the channel of the unconscious body, it does not know which way to go, as consciousness is totally suspended. There is only one person who can lead the aspirant safely through that dark channel, and that person in yoga is known as guru.

The word guru does not mean yoga teacher. It is a Sanskrit word comprised of two parts: *gu* meaning darkness, and *ru* meaning to dispel. Thus the word literally means 'he who dispels darkness'. This darkness is not meant in any moral or ethical terms, it means a spiritual darkness, a darkness which pertains to the state of individual awareness on the higher planes of consciousness. This darkness can be dispelled through kundalini yoga, and for that you need to know the techniques involved in this practice.

Before one begins this yoga, one must be able to sit for meditation for an extended period of time. Therefore, prior training in hatha yoga is required.

What is the role of hatha yoga in kundalini yoga and tantra?

Swami Satyananda: Hatha yoga and pranayama are the foundation of kundalini yoga and tantra. Asanas, pranayamas, mudras and bandha are all aids to the awakening and ascent of the great power of kundalini. There has to be a proper combination of all these in order to implement the scheme. The combination of these four is known as kriya yoga. Not all asanas or pranayamas are helpful in the awakening of kundalini, but quite a few are, and they are combined very well in kriya yoga.

It is most important to know that certain combinations of hatha yoga can influence the mind. For instance, there is *khechari mudra*, folding back the tongue and inserting it into the palate. There is *vajroli mudra*, in which the whole urinary complex is contracted. There is *moola bandha*, the contraction of the perineal area between the anus and the urinary system. These are just a few practices which create certain influences on the structure of the mind: then the

mind becomes very tame. This is the practice of kriya yoga, which is from the tantric tradition.

Do all the yogas lead to kundalini yoga?

Swami Satyananda: There is a dormant shakti in everybody, about which they are either totally ignorant or have a lot of misconceptions. If a person was told that in a particular place in their house was a treasure of gold, what would they do? Would they say, “I have a little money in the bank, I do not want this treasure.” Idiots would say that but no intelligent person would say that.

Beyond the powers of the indriyas in the mind, beyond the powers of memory and other faculties that we have today, there is a dormant potential force which needs to be awakened and connected or linked with the higher centres of consciousness. After achieving that link between shakti, the higher energy, and the higher realm of consciousness, one is able to operate much better. This is the science of kundalini yoga, at once related to hatha yoga, raja yoga and tantra yoga – all the yogas ultimately lead to this point. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (3:107), this truth is expressed:

*Kandordhve kundalee shaktih suptaa mokshaaya yoginaam;
Vandhanaaya cha moodhaanaam yastaam velti sa yogavit.*

The kundalini shakti sleeps above the kanda. This shakti is the means of liberation to the yogi and bondage for the ignorant. One who knows this is the knower of yoga.

Is hatha yoga part of kundalini yoga?

Swami Satyananda: There is a beautiful mantra in the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* (2:12):

*Prithvyaptejo’nilakhe samutthite panchaatmake yogagune pravritte;
Na tasyo rogo na jaraa na mrihyuh praaptasya yogaagnimayam shareeram.*

When the fivefold elements of yoga come to the notice of a yogi, while concentrating the mind on earth, water, light, air and ether, then his gross body becomes the body

made of the fire of yoga and he is not affected by disease, old age or death.

What happens then? The body is the yogic body. This is about hatha yoga and there needs to be a redefining of the modern interpretation of hatha yoga. Hatha yoga is a higher yoga, a part of tantra, a part of kundalini yoga.

How is hatha yoga used to raise the kundalini?

Swami Sivananda: A hatha yogi brings down the prana by the practice of jalandhara bandha, by practising moola bandha he halts the downward tendency of apana, and having accustomed himself to the practice of ashwini mudra, he makes the apana go upward with the mind intent on kumbhaka. Through the practice of uddiyana bandha, he forces the united prana-apanas to enter the sushumna nadi along with kundalini, and through shakti chhalini mudra, he takes kundalini from chakra to chakra. By this procedure a hatha yogi conquers *dehadhyasa*, false identification with the body.

Does kriya yoga include hatha yoga?

Swami Niranjanananda: The purpose of kriya yoga is the synthesis of all the yogas. It includes components of hatha yoga, raja yoga and kundalini yoga. Our body and mind are not yet adapted to practise this kriya yoga. Before starting kriya yoga, one first needs to perfect hatha yoga, then achieve a certain state in raja yoga, mind management, so that as kriya yoga is practised and psychic experiences begin to happen, they can be handled more efficiently, effectively and easily, and they can be understood. Each experience of kriya yoga is a map of one's spiritual journey. Therefore, kriya yoga has always been treated as a sacred and secret subject, mainly due to our non-transcendental brain being incapable of experiencing the transcendental reality. Therefore, prior to practising kriya yoga, practise the other yogas to change the non-transcendental brain into a transcendental brain.

How does the combination of hatha yoga practices in kriya yoga make it a more powerful system?

Swami Satyananda: An example is vipareeta karani mudra, which is the first practice in kriya yoga. In kriya yoga a particular concentration and visualization is used in the practice which is omitted in the hatha yogasana technique. The practice is also more powerful when ujjayi pranayama and khechari mudra are used.

There are also two forms of pranayama. One type is learned in yoga class: breathe in, breathe out, breathe in, breathe out. The other form is used in tantra, when pranayama is combined in a systematic way with mudras and bandhas. This is known as kriya yoga. Pranayama is a powerful method – with the help of pranayama, awakening takes place all of a sudden. Pranayama is not only a breathing exercise: when the breath is held and jalandhara, uddiyana and moola bandha are practised, the kundalini is heated.

Though hatha yoga is guaranteed to awaken kundalini when practised under the given conditions, kriya yoga is an even more powerful practice for those who are predominantly rajasic and who should not force their minds directly into concentration. Kriya yoga combines the asanas, pranayamas, mudras and bandhas of hatha yoga which specifically induce pratyahara. For example, siddhasana, padmasana, ujjayi pranayama, khechari, shambhavi, vajroli and yoni mudras, nasikagra drishti, uddiyana, jalandhara, moola and maha bandhas. Kriya yoga is an ancient initiation and practice for which adequate preparation is required.

How are the five koshas affected by combining hatha yoga and raja yoga techniques in kriya yoga?

Swami Niranjanananda: Yoga says that there are five different dimensions or koshas in the human body: *annamaya kosha*, the physical body or the body of matter; *pranamaya kosha*, the body of energy; *manomaya kosha*, the body of mind or mental experiences; *vijnanamaya kosha*, the body of cognitive faculties; *anandamaya kosha*, the body of bliss.

The physical practices of hatha yoga, asana and pranayama, influence and alter the performance of annamaya kosha. If one goes more deeply into the practices of mudra and bandha, the pranamaya kosha is stimulated. Then if one goes more deeply into the raja yoga practices of pratyahara and dharana, manomaya kosha is activated. Vijnanamaya kosha is activated by the practices of dhyana.

In kriya yoga, asanas, breath awareness, breath control, visualizations and willpower are all combined, and in this way, the four dimensions of our personality (excluding anandamaya kosha) are activated at the same time.

Is the system of hatha yoga based on the theory of kundalini?

Swami Sivananda: Hatha yoga builds up its philosophy around kundalini. The methods adopted in it are different from tantric sadhana to which kundalini actually belongs. Hatha yoga seeks to awaken kundalini through the discipline of the physical body, purification of the nadis and controlling prana.

Through the asanas it tones up the entire nervous system and brings it under conscious control. Through bandhas and mudras it controls the prana, regulates its movements and even blocks and seals it without allowing it to move. Through kriyas it purifies the inner organs of the physical body. And, finally, through pranayama it brings the mind itself under the control of the yogi. The kundalini is made to go upwards to sahasrara through these combined methods.

Without generating kundalini shakti there is no possibility of transcending empirical existence. The average mind and body function on a very low voltage of energy. For higher experience to take place a super boost of energy is required to activate the brain centres. It can only be accomplished when the fluctuating energies of ida and pingala are absorbed into mooladhara and exploded through sushumna nadi in the centre of the spinal axis. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (3:105) it is written:

*Uddhaatayetkapaatam tu yathaa kunchikayaa hathaat;
Kundalinyaa tathaa yogee mokshadvaaram vibhedayet.*

Just as a door is opened with a key, similarly the yogi opens the door to liberation with kundalini.

Activation of sushumna indicates that the whole brain will awaken. If kundalini goes through either ida or pingala then only half the brain and nervous system has been activated. Kundalini must ascend through sushumna so that the central nervous system is activated, not only the parasympathetic or sympathetic nervous system. Kundalini is not just a mystical name. It is the name of the potential force inherent in every human being. Humanity has not yet used its full capacity to live and experience.

Opening the door to liberation is not an easy task. There must first be preparation. The spinal pathway of sushumna has to be cleaned. The chakras have to be opened and activated. If the door is opened before this has taken place, consciousness may enter into a dark, dingy dungeon instead of a sparkling, illumined palace. One should practise hatha yoga under the guidance of an adept guru. This is the only way, and it is the short way.



7

Sadhana

THE IMPORTANCE OF SADHANA

What is the role of sadhana on the spiritual path?

Swami Sivananda: The conscious attempt to merge oneself in the supreme reality is called spiritual sadhana. This should be the common aim of all, though different processes may be used. If one wishes to evolve quickly, the sadhana must be of the right kind. Those on the path of self-reliance can select their own sadhana for daily practice. Those on the path of self-surrender should obtain the right kind of sadhana from a guru and practise it with intense faith. In *Shiva Samhita* (3:16) it is written:

*Shraddhayaatmavataam pumsaam siddhirbhavati nishchitaa;
Anyeshaancha na siddhih syaattasmaadyatnena saadhayet.*

The person who has control over himself attains verily success through faith; none other can succeed. Therefore, with faith, the yoga should be practised with care and perseverance.

What is sadhana?

Swami Satyananda: In Sanskrit the word *sadhana* means ‘to practise’, and hence the practitioner is known as a *sadhaka*. What he practises is known as sadhana. The object of practice is known as *sadhya* and when the sadhana has matured, the

results which are accomplished are known as siddhis. Often the word *siddhi* is interpreted to mean psychic accomplishments but, according to raja yoga, it means perfection of mind, and sadhana means to train and perfect the crude mind.

Does the hatha yoga tradition give details about how to practise sadhana?

Swami Satyananda: The yoga shastras which expound higher knowledge agree that this knowledge should be kept to oneself. Whatever a sadhaka gains or achieves during the period of sadhana should be a private affair. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:11) it is written:

*Hathavidyaa param gopyaa yoginaa siddhimichchataa;
Bhavedveeryavatee guptaa nirveeryaa tu prakaashitaa.*

Hatha yoga is the greatest secret of the yogis who wish to attain perfection (siddhi). Indeed, to be fruitful, it must be kept secret; revealed it becomes powerless.

This may seem a little out of context as the book itself appears to be disclosing the secrets of the practices, but in fact, when one learns under the guidance of a guru, it is realized that Yogi Swatmarama has only stated the bare essentials as guidelines for the practice of asana and other techniques so that the science of hatha yoga will be preserved for humanity.

What has been given here is the system of hatha yoga without too much elucidation. It is left up to the practitioner to find out from his guru what is actually involved. Yogi Swatmarama is not advocating the performance of a particular sadhana. He merely noted down the system and outlined the correct methods of practice.

Why do the classical hatha yoga texts offer different approaches to sadhana?

Swami Niranjanananda: There is no definite rule that yoga must have a certain number of limbs. The yoga taught in *Gheranda Samhita* is known as *saptanga yoga*, seven limbs of

yoga. In other yogic texts *ashtanga yoga*, eightfold-yoga or eight-limbed yoga is described. In *Hatharatnavali*, authored by the great yoga exponent Srinivasa Bhatta, four limbs of yoga are given. The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* of Yogi Swatmarama also has four chapters. In *Goraksha Ashtakam*, written by Sage Gorakhnath, six limbs of yoga are described.

According to the needs of an age and its society, varying traditions of yoga come into vogue. Another possible reason for these variances is that in earlier times it was thought that the practices of yoga were meant only for saints, sages, great souls, renunciates and those who were non-attached to worldly desires. In that exalted state they might not have been required to perfect the preliminary *yamas*, self-restraints, and *niyamas*, self-observances, of yoga. Therefore, yama and niyama were not included in many of the texts. At a later stage, however, sages added the *yamas* and *niyamas* to the definition of yoga, as with the changing times ordinary people started displaying an interest in yoga.

What is the purpose of bahiranga yoga, external yoga sadhana?

Swami Niranjanananda: *Bahiranga yoga* refers to the practices we can perform to purify the physical body, which is the vehicle for experiencing life. The body is the vehicle with which one can perform and fulfil one's duties, obligations and dharmas. The body has to be maintained in a state of optimum health. Optimum health does not mean having a disease-free body as the body cannot be free from disease and illness. The seers realized and stated that in creation everything which is subject to birth goes through transformation – birth, illness, ageing and death. This is the natural law which cannot be changed. Optimum health is maintaining the harmony of the *pranas* whatever the state of the body may be. Maintaining balance of the *pranas* has become the foundation stone for yogic management principles.

When the normal harmony of the body changes, problems occur. Therefore, *bahiranga yoga* emphasizes optimum

health of the body by maintaining harmony and avoiding situations which create disharmony. The yogis said that to implement this concept, one has to begin to work with what is tangible, what is visible, to be in touch with the body. How does one manage the imbalances in the body? How does one eliminate the accumulated toxins? How does one remove the pranic blockages? Asanas, pranayamas, mudras, bandhas and shatkarmas form this sadhana. Our body is misused day in and day out. With all this misuse the body still performs well, so imagine how it will perform when it is treated properly!

In order to develop physiological balance and eliminate imbalances, the yogis described the processes of hatha yoga. Hatha yoga is the doorway to yoga as it allows one to accept oneself, to move from this physical self into the subtle realms of one's nature. Bahiranga yoga is external physical practice and sadhana. Hatha yoga is the gateway to bahiranga yoga. Asanas, pranayamas, mudras and bandhas are techniques to improve the physical system, to service this vehicle. People who have had regular servicing have youthful bodies, even in old age. This can be seen in yogis who, although well advanced in age, follow a systematic routine and discipline.

How can hatha yoga sadhana restore health and vitality to those who have not taken care of their bodies?

Swami Sivananda: How many people find in themselves the unmistakable signs of disease, declining health, vim, vigour and vitality? How many feel the grip of premature old age? Why is the blame unjustly thrown on heredity without for a moment recognizing that for nearly thirty or thirty-five years one has been flouting the laws of life?

Thirty-five years of wrong living! Thirty-five years of wrong feeding! Thirty-five years of wrong breathing! Thirty-five years of wrong thinking! Thirty-five years spent in abject ignorance of the relationship between brain and brawn! Thirty-five years, in fact, spent doing everything possible to develop the 'disease' of old age!

Now suppose the whole situation is reversed, and in place of wrong living, wrong feeding and wrong breathing, right living, right feeding, right breathing and so forth are introduced – what will be the effect? Will physical and mental degeneration give place to physical and mental regeneration? The answer given by the seers of the East is an emphatic, “Yes”. The Indian yogis have conclusively proved that by following a regimen it is quite possible to rebuild the human body, to reconstruct the human mind, to regain lost youth, strength and beauty. According to the saints, sages and rishis of yore, the key to accomplishing this remarkable feat is to be found in yogasanas.

How important is regular sadhana for progress in hatha yoga?

Swami Satyananda: There is a saying that practice makes perfect. One may read as many principles as one can absorb intellectually, but until they are put into practice there is no experience of their reality or manifestation of their inherent potential. A doctor does not become a doctor until he can practise all that he has learned theoretically. An engineer cannot make a machine just by reading instructions on how to do it. The final product will not be perfect until one has tried many times.

Regular practice of any yoga technique creates a pattern in the body and mind, and after many years of practice, perfection is attained, regardless of the initial circumstances. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:65–66) this point is emphasized:

*Kriyaayuktasya siddhih syaadakriyasya katham bhavet;
Na shastraapaathamatarena yogasiddhih prajaayate.*

Perfection results from practical application. Without practising how can it happen? Just by reading the shastras, perfection in yoga will never be attained. (65)

*Na veshadhaaranam siddheh kaaranam na cha tatkathaa;
Kriyaiva kaaranam siddheh satyametanna samshayah.*

Neither by wearing the garb of a siddha, nor by talking about it is perfection attained. Only through practical application does one become a siddha. This is the truth without a doubt. (66)

Where truth exists there is no place for illusion or delusion. One cannot become a yogi just by assuming the external appearance, nor can one fool others into believing it – the lack of inner strength and understanding will expose anyone who is a fraud. One may delude oneself by looking like a yogi or ascetic but the atma cannot be deluded, nor can the cloth give power and knowledge. It can only come by training the body and refining the gross consciousness.

How important is the guru in hatha yoga sadhana?

Swami Satyananda: One's specific sadhana is between that person and his or her guru. When the sadhana is mastered, the result is siddhi or perfection. Whatever has been perfected is one's own attainment and this is what the guru has enabled that person to become. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* the importance of the guru for success in sadhana is repeatedly mentioned, along with descriptions of specific practices, (3:78–79):

*Tatraasti karanam divyam sooryasya mukhavanchanam;
Guroopadeshato jneyam na tu shastraarthakotibhih.*

There is a wonderful means by which the nectar is averted from falling into the sun. This is obtained by the guru's instructions and not from the hundreds of shastras (treatises). (78)

*Urdhvanaabheradhastaloroodhvam bhaanuradhah shashee;
Karanee vipareetaakhyaa guruvaakyena labhyate.*

With the navel region above and the palate below, the sun is above and the moon below. It is called vipareet karani. When given by the guru's instructions it is fruitful. (79)

Hatharatnavali (2:67) makes the same point:

*Tatraasti divyam karanam sooryasya mukhabandhanam;
Guroo padeshato jneyam na tu shaastraardha kotibhih.*

There is a divine practice which binds the mouth of the sun in the navel. It can only be known from the instructions of a guru, not from millions of discussions.

One who has no guru can sit for one hundred and twelve years and may not make much headway, unless they are already enlightened. Only a man with spiritual insight can guide one on the inward path. If one wants to experience another state of mind beyond this sensorial experience, the finite perception must be altered. How can the finite mind concentrate on the infinite? The guru is essential, as the light of his atma illumines that of the disciple. Without that there can be no self-realization. In *Shiva Samhita* (3:10-14) it is written:

*Adhunaa kathayishyaami kshipram yogasya siddhaye;
Yajjnaatvaa naavaseedanti yogino yogasaadhane.*

Now I shall tell you how to easily attain success in yoga, by knowing which, the yogis never fail in the practice of yoga. (10)

*Bhavedveeryavatee vidyaa guruvaktrasamudbhavaa;
Anyathaa phalaheenaa syaannirveeryaapyatiduhkhadaa.*

Only the knowledge imparted by a guru, through his lips, is powerful and useful; otherwise it becomes fruitless, weak and very painful. (11)

*Gurum santoshya yatnena ye vai vidyaamupaasate;
Avalambena vidyaayaastasyaah phalamavaapnu yaat.*

He who is devoted to knowledge, while pleasing the guru with every attention, readily obtains the fruit of that knowledge. (12)

*Guruh pitaa gururmaataa gururdevo na samshayah;
Karmanaa manasaa vaachaa tasmaatsarvaih prasevyate.*

There is not the least doubt that guru is father, guru is mother and guru is even God; and as such, he should be served by all with their thought, word and deed. (13)

*Guruprasaadatah sarvam labhyate shubhamaatmanah.
Tasmaatsevyo gururnityamanyathaa na shubham bhavet.*

By guru's favour everything good relating to one's self is obtained. So the guru ought to be daily served; else there can be nothing auspicious. (14)

Why do the scriptures say that the practices and sadhana must be kept secret?

Swami Satyananda: The scriptures repeatedly say that neither the practices, the siddhis, nor the sadhana can be divulged to anyone. It is the guru's decision who should receive the knowledge, and it can only be gained through experience. There is no merit in trying to share one's spiritual experiences with another.

Goarakhnath used to tell his disciples that hatha yoga is the science of the subtle body. It is the means by which the body's energy can be controlled. He said that hatha yoga is the means of controlling the two main energy channels of the positive and negative currents. The positive-negative nature of energy exists in every part of our being. Hatha yoga not only brings about a balance in the energies, but also in the duality of the mind, and between the lower nature and the higher mind, between the individual soul and the universal spirit. It involves one's self and the atma, so why bring anyone else into the picture? In the *Shiva Samhita* (3:34 and 5:207) it says that the practitioner should keep his practice secret:

*Upaayam cha pravakshyaami kshipram yogasya siddhaye;
Gopaneeyam saadhakaanaam yena siddhirbhavetkhalu.*

Now I will tell you the means by which success in yoga is quickly obtained; it must be kept secret by the practitioner so that success may come with certainty. (3:34)

*Hathavidyaa parangopyaa yoginaa siddhimichchitaa;
bhavedveeryavatee guptaa nirveeryaa cha prakaasitaa.*

The yogi, desirous of success, should keep the hatha yoga as a great secret. It becomes fruitful while kept secret, revealed it loses its power. (5:207)

In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (3:9) it says:

*Gopaneeyam prayatnena yathaa ratnakarandakam;
Kasyachi eva vaktavyam kulastreesuratam yathaa.*

These must remain a secret just like precious stones, and not be talked about to anyone, just as one does not tell others about his intimate relations with his wife.

This develops the love between husband and wife. Similarly, if a sadhaka has any respect for his own beloved, the pure atma, whatever experience and power he is bestowed with is his own affair and has to be cultivated privately.

This is a purely logical and scientific process. When a small light is burning in a room at night, the whole room is illumined. If that little light is taken outside into the vast open space, the light is engulfed by the night and absorbed in the darkness. The same principle applies to the power gained through sadhana. The power may enlighten one's own consciousness, but displayed and dissipated in the magnitude of the outside world, it loses strength.

Sadhana is like a seed and siddhis are like flowers. If one wants a seed to germinate it must be left in the soil. If it is dug up to show friends and neighbours how it is progressing, it will not grow any further, it will die. Likewise, a siddhi is just the germinating point of one's sadhana. If a practitioner is trying to cultivate fully bloomed awareness of atma, they have to act properly. Sadhana is not a biology lesson where the plant is dug up to investigate its roots. Sadhana involves

the growth of one's spirit and it is like the process of giving birth. When a foetus is growing in the womb, there is no peeping into the intermediate stage of its development, one must wait for the final product.

Keeping sadhana and siddhis under cover has a powerful psychological effect. If one talks about and displays one's attainments, the sense of 'I' or ego becomes very acute. 'I' have achieved, 'I' had this experience, or 'I' can do this. If someone wants to experience cosmic consciousness, *ahamkara*, or ego, is the greatest barrier. Siddhis never last long, they are impermanent. After a certain stage of evolution they disappear. If a practitioner associates with the feeling that 'I' have perfected this and that, he will expect to be able to perform great feats. This means living to meet the expectations of others, otherwise they will not think that person is great after all. One day when the siddhi leaves, how will the situation be coped with? In spiritual life it is very important to keep the ego under control.

Most of the great saints and siddhas who had powers rarely displayed them. Only the people who lived very close to them knew their greatness. Many siddhas who did display their powers, such as Christ, were persecuted. Therefore, for one's own good and for the good of others it is said, as a warning rather than mere advice, that sadhana and siddhis are to be kept secret.

How long must one practise sadhana to perfect hatha yoga?

Swami Satyananda: In spiritual life, twelve years is an important cycle. Perhaps it takes that amount of time to purify and prepare the pranic and psychic bodies for spiritual awakening. In the guru-disciple tradition also, the disciple is meant to spend twelve years training with his guru. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:40), it is written:

*Aatmadhyaayee mitaahaaree yaavaddvaadashavatsaram;
Sadaa siddhaasanaabhyaasaadyogee nishpattimaapnuyaat.*

The yogi who meditates on the self or atma, takes moderate and pure food and practises siddhasana for twelve years, attains perfection or siddhi.

Twelve years sounds like a long time to have to practise one thing before perfecting it, but it should be taken into consideration that it also takes many years of study and practice to become a qualified practitioner of medicine or law. In comparison to the rest of one's life, twelve years is not a long time if it is going to culminate in perfection and the awakening of a higher state of consciousness. If people can devote a whole lifetime to the pursuit of material goals, why not dedicate twelve years for the development of higher awareness and the unfoldment of the spirit?

It takes many years for the body and mind to change. After a cycle of seven years all the body cells have been completely replaced. It can be said that one has a new body. It takes longer, however, to restructure the mind and remould the awareness. Many shastras say that sadhana takes twelve years to fructify. Twelve years enables gradual and complete restructuring of the body, mind, emotions and psyche.

Does sadhana always bring a result and if so, will it be obvious to the practitioner?

Swami Niranjanananda: What is the result of yoga sadhana? Is it possible to attain self-realization through yogic practices? Attainment is the result. If yoga is practised, one will definitely benefit from the effects. How much is achieved depends on each person's capacity to prepare for and undertake their sadhana. Only then can the result be known.

The rule of nature, however, is that there has to be a result from each action. Waving a hand in the air creates a result, which is secret. If a mosquito lands on the body, a wave of the hand will cause the mosquito to fly away. This is a gross, external result, but it has a subtle result as well, which is the creation of sound. One is unaware of this result.

It can be called a subtle effect or secret result that friction is taking place between matter – the hand – and air. A sound is produced, but it is not heard. If the ears were capable of hearing very subtle sounds, perhaps that sound would be heard. Similarly, with yogic practices, subtle or secret results are created which will be experienced, but may not be noticed or understood with one's current level of wisdom.

What are the different ways of understanding and performing sadhana?

Swami Niranjanananda: It needs to be remembered that sadhana can be done in many ways. Yoga and tantra are the only two ancient teachings or sciences in which different practices and techniques are taught in order to know each and every stage of one's life. The practices include the body, mind and higher knowledge, but were only followed by renunciates, sannyasins and saints. In a householder's life sadhana was limited to the conduct of dharma, *dharmacharana*, and this is still a commonly held belief in some parts of society. If the average person in India is asked whether he does sadhana, he will reply that every morning he lights three sticks of incense in front of his deity, lights a lamp and recites one or two mantras. That is his sadhana.

According to yoga, however, that is only one aspect of sadhana. This broader understanding of sadhana is expressed in the *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, *Yoga Vasishtha*, Vedas and other literary works. *Shareeraamadyam khalu dharmasaadhanam*, through the medium of the body a human being can fulfil all his duties, obligations and dharmas. This concept, however, is not properly understood. Again and again people interpret it as meaning that a person should make an effort and do some purushartha through the medium of the body in order to reach God. But how is this to be done? Through yoga. When a devotee and follower of dharma adopts yoga, he becomes a yogi.

DAILY SADHANA

How important is regularity of sadhana?

Swami Sivananda: Never miss a day in sadhana. Be very regular with sadhana, only then will there be success. Regularity is of paramount importance. Nothing can be achieved by a happy-go-lucky life. Stick to one place for three years. Draw a program of daily routine. Then follow it to the very letter at any cost. Success is assured. In *Shiva Samhita* (4:9–10) it is written:

*Tasmaadabhyaasanam nityam kartavyam mokshakaankshibhih;
Abhyaasaajjaaya te siddhirabhyaasaanmokshamaapnuyaat.*

Therefore, those who wish for emancipation should practise this daily. Through practice (abhyasa), success is obtained; through practice one gains liberation. (9)

*Samvidam labhate'bhyaasaadyogobhyaasaatpravartate;
Mudraanaam siddhirabhyaa saadabhyaasaadvaayusaadhanam;
Kaalavanchanamabhyaasaattathaa mrityunjayo bhavet.*

Perfect consciousness is gained through practice. Yoga is attained through practice; success in mudras comes by practice; through practice success is gained in pranayama. Death can be cheated of its prey through practice, and man becomes the conqueror of death by practice. (10)

How is it possible to spend the amount of time on sadhana that the hatha yoga texts recommend?

Swami Satyananda: It is obviously impossible for the average person to practise as frequently as the traditional texts advise, and it is not really recommended. It is quite sufficient to practise in the morning and also in the evening if time allows. It must be kept in mind that the specifications laid down in the hatha yoga tradition are for recluses who live away from society, free from family and social obligations, and who are practising directly under the guidance of a guru. If a householder were to perform these practices so frequently there would be very little time and energy for anything else.

The practitioner of today does not need to practise hatha yoga for hours and hours together. He is dynamic and needs to express himself through action and various interrelationships with people. Yoga must meet the demands of the various elements of one's personality, and for this reason a balanced combination of hatha yoga, karma yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga are needed.

Therefore, when the yoga texts are read, they must be viewed in a very practical manner. The techniques can be practised according to the instructions given, but which techniques should be done and how much one practises has to be decided according to one's own physical and mental capacity, and the amount of time that can be devoted to sadhana.

How much time should a beginner spend on sadhana?

Swami Satyananda: One should not attempt to do a long list of practices each day. For a beginner, yoga means just ten to fifteen minutes daily. This is based on objective research which has been carried out.

Just as one doesn't increase one's food, it is also not necessary to increase one's practices. A person doesn't increase food by half a chapatti every month, so what is the point of increasing half a minute of yoga every month? Five rounds means five rounds. Does one take a bath ten times a day or eat food the whole day? No, three meals a day gives enough energy for all activities. In the same way, if yoga is practised for a short time in the morning and evening, it will keep one balanced and consistent throughout the day. Too much yoga too quickly means increasing the will beyond its capacity. Those who try too hard only become exhausted and frustrated. Yoga is not a game of table tennis or cards.

How can one gain maximum benefit from a short daily routine of practices?

Swami Niranjanananda: For the yoga practice to take root in life it has to become part of the daily routine. Although many asanas are taught, only a few are needed each morning

to ensure optimum health. At this time, at least five asanas should be done for general maintenance of the body and physical wellbeing. These asanas are most effective if done in the morning immediately after waking up. To do those five practices takes a maximum of twenty minutes, even with shavasana practised at the end. Shavasana becomes the sixth practice.

The first practice is *tadasana*, the palm tree pose. Everybody can do *tadasana* to improve the circulation, to release tensions and to feel light in the body. The second practice is *tiryak tadasana*, the swaying palm tree pose, which is very effective for massaging and loosening up the side muscles that we rarely use in our daily activities, and for compressing and stretching the digestive organs. *Kati chakrasana*, the waist rotating pose, is the third practice. It provides a twist for the lower back, the upper back and the hips. The fourth practice is *surya namaskara*, salutations to the sun. The twelve postures of *surya namaskara* mainly involve forward bending and backward bending. The fifth practice should be an asana of inversion, like *sarvangasana*, the shoulder stand pose, or *vipareeta karani asana*, the half shoulder stand, or *sirshasana*, the head stand. After completing the five practices, lie down in *shavasana*, the corpse pose, and relax. These are the most effective practices for maintaining a healthy body.

After completing the asanas practise two breathing techniques. The first is *nadi shodhana*, alternate nostril breathing, with an equal ratio of inhalation and exhalation. If it is seven seconds breathing in, it should be seven seconds breathing out. If it is ten seconds breathing in, it should be ten seconds breathing out. For this breathing technique to be effective and to allow the body to separate the gases from the air and to absorb the oxygen, a minimum of ten rounds needs to be practised.

The second breathing practice is *bhramari pranayama*, the humming bee breath, which relaxes the nervous system. Do it about ten times. These are the two pranayamas that should be done by normal, healthy people.

The importance of daily practice is emphasized in *Hatharatnavali* (1:70):

*Tyaktanidro mitahaaro jitashvaaso jitendriyah;
Hathaabhyaasaparo nityam yogee brahmasamo bhavet.*

The sadhakawho has awakened sleep, has controlled the diet, has won victory over the breath and sense organs, and who practices hatha yoga daily, becomes equal to Brahma.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRECAUTIONS

What is the way to perfection in yoga?

Swami Sivananda: Every step in yoga has to be mastered. Do not take up any higher step before completely mastering the lower step. Gradually ascend the successive stages boldly and cheerfully. This is the right royal road to perfection in yoga. Aspirants who do not possess true and unwavering faith in their gurus and the teachings of the scriptures fail to attain success in yoga.

How do the seasons influence hatha yoga sadhana?

Swami Sivananda: It is stated in *Gheranda Samhita* (5:8–9), that yogic practices should not be commenced in winter, summer and rainy seasons, but only in spring and autumn.

*Hemante shishire greeshme varshaayaam cha ritau tathaa;
Yogaarambham na kurveeta krite yogo hi rogadah.*

Yogic practices should not be commenced during winter, extreme cold, summer or the rainy season. If yogic practices are undertaken during these seasons, it leads to the spread of diseases. (8)

*Vasante sharadi proktam yogaarambham samaacharet;
Tadaa yogee bhavetsiddho rogaanmukto bhaveddhruvam.*

It is correct to start the practices during spring and autumn. When yogic practices are undertaken during these seasons, one attains success and becomes free from diseases. (9)

It does depend, however, upon the temperature of the particular place and the strength of the individual. Generally, cool hours are best suited. In hot places one should not practise during the day. Early morning hours are suitable. The practitioner should completely avoid practices in summer in those places where the temperature remains hot even in winter. If one lives in cool places practices can be done during the day.

How important is an accurate method of practice in hatha yoga?

Swami Satyananda: If performed properly and systematically any yogic technique will activate a greater pranic capacity and thus eliminate disorders and malfunctioning in the physical body, but if the practices are done incorrectly and unsystematically, more physical disturbances will develop. It is stated in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (2:16):

*Praanaayaamena yuktena sarvarogakshayo bhavet;
Ayuktaabhyasayogena sarvarogasamudbhavah.*

By proper practice of pranayama etc., all diseases are eradicated. Through improper practice all diseases can arise.

If practice is irregular or incorrect it can be very harmful and it is better not to practise at all. Even if the practitioner fails to observe one simple rule, sickness can result. For example, always practise on an empty stomach, whether performing asana, pranayama, mudra or bandha. If one stands on one's head after meals, this will definitely damage the digestive system. One must be very careful about the rules and precautions for pranayama and the sequence in which any of the hatha yoga techniques are done.

Hatha yoga is the science of the body, mind and spirit, and it should be approached as such, and never in a haphazard or careless manner. It is dangerous to try and learn it by following instructions from books. For harmonious development one must have the guidance of a teacher with

a comprehensive knowledge of yoga and enough sensitivity to recognize the student's individual needs.

What is the best approach to perfecting hatha yoga?

Swami Niranjanananda: After learning to read and write, knowledge of the scriptures is possible. A child who has never learned the letters of the alphabet cannot write sentences correctly and cannot read. Other children who start at the beginning and learn the alphabet, the vowels and consonants, forming words and sentences, reading and writing, gradually, with sequential education, become proficient. With this knowledge they can read and learn from the scriptures, the sciences and can develop in all aspects of general education. It is the same with hatha yoga. After dedicated sequential yoga practice, attainment or self-realization is possible.

An aspirant needs to make gradual progress. It is simply not practical to expect a PhD dissertation from a child studying at primary level. In the same way, problems arise when a person who does not know the ABC of yoga tries to awaken their kundalini. Without a foundation of knowledge, how can atomic science be understood? Forcing oneself in this way will lead to a negative result. The first requirement, therefore, is to gain an understanding of one's basic physical, mental and psychological interactions before embarking on the yogic path. In *Gheranda Samhita* (1:5) it is written:

*Abhyaasaatkaadivarnaanaam yathaa shaastraani bodhayet;
Tathaa yogam samaasaadhya tattvajnaanam cha labhyate*

Just as by practising the letters of the alphabet in sequence, knowledge of all the scriptures is possible, similarly, by mastering yoga, self-realization is achieved.

Sage Gheranda says that yoga should be practised sequentially. By adhering to sequential practice, self-realization will gradually be achieved. One needs to be conversant with the physical, mental, intellectual, psychological and internal

activities of the body and mind. Once this foundation is in place, understanding and experience are necessary, and only then does the state of self-realization come. If a person who does not know how to swim, zealously jumps into deep water after seeing someone swimming there, he will simply drown. Such action indicates ignorance. Sage Gheranda spells out the method to overcome this lack of discrimination. He advises seekers to progress gradually, step by step, from the very beginning in order to learn and understand everything correctly.

It is the same in practical life. If one proceeds slowly, step by step, one will make continual progress and not become fatigued. Otherwise what happens? One runs fast at the start and then stops due to tiredness. This approach is of no use. One should begin the practice of yoga with an understanding of the practicalities of life and one's own capacity, not merely due to the prompting of desire. After all, human beings desire many things that they can never achieve in life.

What is the ideal time of day to practise asana and pranayama?

Swami Niranjanananda: Between four and six in the morning. That is the traditional time. Why? The body is rested, the atmosphere is relatively free from pollution, the air is full of life-giving negative ions and oxygen, and it is fresh. Therefore, performing the practices of asana and pranayama at that time is considered to be most beneficial. Of course, for many people this may not be possible, so certain changes have to be made depending on their lifestyle. Pranayama can be done later in the day, or in the evening, but try to do asanas in the morning.

There are certain rules concerning asana and pranayama. The stomach has to be empty before practising asana. The best time is either before taking breakfast, lunch or dinner and at least three hours after having taken the previous meal. Depending on one's requirements the teacher should guide the student along these lines, but the timing can be adjusted

as needed. It is not necessary to have an empty stomach for the practice of simple pranayama. Simply remember the basic rule – an empty stomach at the time of asana practice leads to a healthy life.

Is there a recommended order for the practices done in daily sadhana?

Swami Sivananda: Everyone should select a course of a few exercises in asana, pranayama and meditation according to his temperament, capacity, convenience and requirement.

The general order of practice is: first of all asanas, then mudras, then pranayama and then meditation. Since the early morning time is suitable for meditation, however, follow this order: japa, meditation, asanas, mudras and pranayama. This is a better way. Each person should follow the order which is suitable to them. After doing asanas, rest for five minutes and then begin pranayama.

The goal of life is self-realization. If a practitioner is really sincere and wishes to have quick, sure success, he must have a systematic routine for asana, pranayama, japa, meditation and study.

What is the sequence for the various practices performed during sadhana?

Swami Satyananda: *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:17) clearly states that asana is the first part of hatha yoga:

*Hathasya prathamaangatvaadaasanam poorvamuchyate;
Kuryaattadaasanam sthairyamaarogyam chaangalaaghavam.*

Prior to everything, asana is spoken of as the first part of hatha yoga. Having done asana one gets steadiness (firmness) of body and mind; freedom from disease and lightness (flexibility) of the limbs.

When asanas and bandhas are practised one should feel an energy boost afterwards rather than an energy loss. If one experiences tiredness, it means some practices are

being done incorrectly. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:55) Yogi Swatmarama says:

*Evamaasanabandheshu योगेन्द्रो विगतश्रमः;
Abhyasennaadikaashuddhim mudraadipavanakriyaam.*

Thus the best of yogis, being free from fatigue in practising asana and bandha, should practise purification of the nadis, mudras and pranayama.

After asanas, pranayama should be practised to purify the nadis. For this purpose nadi shodhana pranayama is best. Then mudras should be performed to channel the energy and create specific attitudes of mind, and bandhas to force the energy upward. In hatha yoga the sequence is asanas first, then pranayama, mudras and bandhas. Lastly, one should sit quietly in a meditative pose and concentrate on a symbol. If the inner sound can be heard, concentrate on that. This sequence is given in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:56):

*Aasanam kumbhakam chitram mudraakhyam karanam tathaa;
Atha naadaanusandhaanamabhyasaanukramo hathe.*

Asana, the varieties of kumbhaka, practices called mudras and concentration on the inner sound (nada) comprise the sequence of hatha yoga.

Therefore, in the systematic science of hatha yoga, one must first of all prepare the physical body as it is the grossest manifestation of prana. Activate the prana through asana, then practise pranayama to purify the energy channels and to process and balance the prana. Then perform mudras to channel the prana and arouse different faculties of the mind, and bandhas to draw prana upward from the lower centres.

What are the seven limbs of yoga described in *Gheranda Samhita*?

Swami Niranjanananda: In *Gheranda Samhita*, first of all, the cleansing practices for the body, called *shatkarma*, are

discussed. The main ones are: *neti*, nasal cleansing, *dhauti*, cleansing of the head and the entire alimentary canal from the mouth to the anus, *basti*, cleansing the large intestine, *nauli*, massaging and strengthening the abdominal muscles and organs, *kapalbhati*, a type of pranayama, and *trataka*, a method of concentrating the mind. These are considered to be the six purificatory techniques of hatha yoga. Sage Gheranda considered these practices for cleansing the body as the first dimension of yoga.

Next, asanas are discussed. Sage Gheranda has mainly described those asanas which make the body strong and stable. Here the aim is to attain a stage, after ensuring complete control over the body, in which there is no physical discomfort or pain.

In the third dimension, Sage Gheranda discusses mudras, describing twenty-five mudras by which the flow of prana inside the body can be controlled. He believes that prana produces heat and energy inside the body. In higher sadhana, when a person sits in a posture for longer durations, the body generates heat. Normally, this energy is lost as the prana shakti is not controlled inside the body. With the practice of mudras, however, the prana shakti or energy is withdrawn inside the body and not allowed to dissipate. Sage Gheranda has described the mudras in order to retain the prana inside the body.

After mudras he describes pratyahara as the fourth dimension. Firstly, the body is purified and disorders are removed. Next, stability in asana is achieved. Then the prana is balanced and controlled through mudras. In the fourth stage, the mind becomes internalized in a natural way. Sage Gheranda believes that in the state of pratyahara, when the mind is becoming internalized and one-pointed, at that time it is easy to awaken the pranas. In that subtle state no effort is required to awaken the pranas and internalize the mind. After pratyahara, experiences at the subtle level, perfection of the subtle universe, will come in a natural way and one will be able to awaken the prana.

After pratyahara, Sage Gheranda includes pranayama as the fifth dimension. All the pranayama practices mentioned in *Gheranda Samhita* are practised with mantra. In the traditional practice of pranayama the incoming and outgoing breaths are counted, and the duration of inhalation and exhalation equalized. Sage Gheranda has followed the same system, but mantras have been used instead of counting. By including mantras, Sage Gheranda has made the practice of pranayama more powerful. When the mantra is chanted with the breath, the effect of its vibrations is felt, increasing concentration and producing pranic energy. Through the combined effect of pratyahara and pranayama one has control of this awakened energy and it does not become uncontrolled.

Thereafter, *dhyana*, meditation, is included as the sixth dimension. When the prana is awakened, the mind is internalized and meditation comes by itself. Sage Gheranda has mentioned three types of meditation: *bahiranga dhyana*, external meditation, *antaranga dhyana*, inner meditation, and *ekachitta dhyana*, one-pointed meditation. In external meditation there is awareness of the experiences created by the universe and senses, in inner meditation of the experiences created in the subtle mental levels, and in one-pointed meditation inner realization is awakened. In the seventh dimension, samadhi is described, and vital hints are given about how to enter that dimension.

Sage Gheranda has given his seven limbs of yoga another name – *ghatastha yoga*, meaning yoga based on the body. *Ghata* means *sharira*, body. It also means pot or pitcher. He has observed that the body is like a mud pot, which is given a shape with the help of matter and contains whatever God has filled it with – the senses, mind, knowledge, wisdom, ego – all of which makes it one's pitcher.

Therefore, for self-realization yoga begins with the body and through the medium of the body, by controlling the mental and emotional levels, spiritual realization can be awakened. This is his belief.

How does one know what level of practice to do?

Swami Niranjanananda: If yoga practices are done before one is ready for them, it is, of course, not good. They should be done when the time is right. One has to do what is appropriate for one's need – this is common sense yoga.

If techniques are practised which are inappropriate due to lack of information about what is happening in the body, or because one does not recognize what is going on and is pushing too hard, or because the information is given but is blocked for egotistic reasons, one is going to hurt oneself in one way or another. A lot of people experience various problems as a result of having practised yoga incorrectly. The attitude that people have of saying, "Well, I have done that, I have done asana, now I can do pranayama and this and that," is not the right approach if they deny the basic rules of yoga.

As one goes through each successive stage of practice one's levels of perception and information become more and more refined. These systems build one on top of the other and have to be held together. When that happens, the gross structures are unblocked through asana, the next level through pranayama, and the next level through bandha, then the practitioner comes to an information level where the intracellular information is felt. This is the level where one starts to know about mudras – a level is reached where there is attitudinal influence of tissue.

How can one succeed in hatha yoga if the body is old or infirm?

Swami Satyananda: One should not be deterred from practising yoga due to feeling physically inadequate. It does not matter if the body is old or young, sick or feeble, everybody is eligible to practise hatha yoga and to attain self-realization. If one has an inner desire to experience the truth of existence, one will succeed regardless of physical conditions. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:64) Yogi Swatmarama says:

*Yuvaa vridddho'tivridddho vaa vyaadhito durbalalo'pi vaa;
Abhyaasaatsiddhimaapnoti sarvayogeshvatanandritah.*

Whether young or old, very old, sick or feeble, one can attain perfection in all the yogas by practising.

Why does hatha yoga have so many rules?

Swami Niranjanananda: The traditional system of hatha yoga involves several rules which have to be understood and followed. Hatha yoga is a science which makes one aware of the maintenance and preservation of one's body as a means to attain the awakening of energy, kundalini and prana. Therefore, the living conditions and eating habits have to be structured properly by following certain rules. The hatha yoga texts say that if one's environment and habits remain impure, one cannot obtain purity just by practising the prescribed techniques. In *Hatharatnavali* (1:77) it is written:

*Atyaahaarah prayaasashcha prajalpo niyamagrahah;
Janasangam cha laulyam cha shadbhiryogee vinashyati.*

Yoga becomes futile by overeating, overexertion, talking too much, severe austerity, public contact and fickleness of mind.

What sort of environment should there be within the house and around the house? What kind of attitude must one maintain in order to perfect the experience of hatha yoga? And what sort of diet? In *Shiva Samhita* (5:210) it is written:

*Tasmaatkriyaavidhaanena kartavyaa yogipungavaih;
Yadrichchhaalaabhasantushtah santyaktvaantarasanjnakah;
Grihashthashchaapyanaasaktah sa mukto yogasaadhanaat.*

Therefore, the yogis should perform yoga according to the rules of practice. He who is contented with what he gets, who restrains his senses, being a householder who is not absorbed in the household duties, certainly attains emancipation by the practice of yoga.

By living in a suitable environment which is free from distractions that divert the attention, the mind and energy can grow in a positive and constructive way. By regulating the diet and establishing fixed meal times, the pranas can be purified and the body and mind made more stable. After obtaining physical harmony and balance, the energy in the body starts to move and awaken. That awakening is felt at the level of the chakras and the pranas.

How can the practices of hatha yoga be deepened?

Swami Niranjanananda: There are certain forms of awareness one should adopt at the time of asana and pranayama practice. On the first day, when practising asana and pranayama, just have the outer vision of the body, of the muscles and the joints being exercised. During pranayama, feel that the lungs are being exercised. Do not go any further than this.

On the second day, drop this awareness of the muscles, bones, joints and limbs, and move into a deeper level of the body, maybe into the atomic structure. While practising asana and pranayama, see yourself as an atomic being. The body is not to be viewed as something made up of skin, blood vessels, bones, marrow. Have the concept of an atomic structure within the body and see the response of the atoms to the asanas and pranayamas. Do not go beyond this.

On the third day, practise this same set of asanas and pranayamas, but be aware of the neurocellular structure of the body. See the interaction of asana, pranayama, and prana in that dimension.

On the fourth day practise the same set, but go deeper still into the dimension of energy, pure energy. Visualize your body in the form of light – the arms, the legs, the trunk, are made up of different patterns of light. When you practise an asana or a pranayama, see the sparks fly.

On the fifth day, go into another level. Experience the body as consciousness only, not as a physical structure. Experience the body as a feeling, as an emotion, and see

the change in the state of emotion and feeling within the body.

On the sixth day, see yourself as pure logic, buddhi, and experience that dimension at the time of asana and pranayama practice.

On the seventh day, disassociate completely from body and mind; see them as a separate being practising asana and pranayama. Do not associate with the pains and pleasures of the physical, mental, emotional or rational states. Just see the natural spontaneous performance of the body and mind.

In this way, move from one stage to the next. If this process is completed in seven days, then by the eighth day one's perception about one's self and one's awareness of the body will have changed. When through sadhana and continued effort, one is able to see in a single glimpse the actions and interactions of the entire neurocellular structure with prana and with consciousness, then one is ready to move on to the stages of pratyahara and dharana. Try this method. It is very fascinating and gives a new dimension for the understanding of oneself.



8

Lifestyle for Sadhana

THE IDEAL PLACE

What type of place is ideal for practising yoga?

Swami Sivananda: The ideal for the sadhaka or yogi is to secure a place where he will not be disturbed by too many people, animals or insects, and where nature will favour his practice. There he should build his hut. The place should give no cause for anxiety and therefore must be free from destruction by landslides, flood and fire. Damp, marshy ground only breeds mosquitoes and other disease-producing agents, so the hut should be far away from them. It is excellent if the place chosen enjoys an agreeable climate.

The yogi's hut should be small and elegant. It should have good ventilation without too many windows. There should be no room for the eyes to wander about and there should not be too many things in the room lest they distract the attention. The room should be kept scrupulously clean. It may be surrounded by a garden of sweet-smelling and beautiful flowers. A good well within the outer compound is a useful addition. In *Shiva Samhita* (3:20) it is written:

*Sushobhane mathe yogee padmaasanasamanvitah;
Aasanopari samvishya pavanaabhyasamaacharet.*

Let the yogi go to a beautiful and pleasant place of retirement or a cell, assume the posture padmasana, and

sitting on a seat made of kusa grass, begin to practise the regulation of the breath.

It is not always possible to have such an ideal place for practising yoga but the basic principles should be borne in mind. Peaceful atmosphere, solitude, freedom from distraction – if these are ensured one can convert one's room into an ideal hut for the practice of yoga.

How important is it to have a supportive atmosphere for sadhana?

Swami Satyananda: Environment plays a major role in influencing the results of sadhana. If sadhana is performed in a disturbing atmosphere and amidst negative vibrations, too much energy is dissipated in simply trying to overcome the negative influences. The body and mind are very susceptible to negativity and it is much easier to fall under the influence of negative vibrations than to rise above them. A positive environment in itself charges one with energy, inspiration and the will to strive forward in the quest for spiritual enlightenment. Living amidst people who are mainly motivated by ambition and who, thirsty for wealth and power, will push one down at any opportunity, it is difficult to keep one's head above water, let alone make any significant progress in sadhana. Therefore, it is essential for a sadhaka to choose quiet and pure surroundings away from the materialistic and polluted cities. It is stated in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:12):

*Suraajye dhaarmike deshe subhikshe nirupadrave;
Dhanuh pramaanaparyantam shilaagnijalavarjite;
Ekaante mathikaamadhya sthaatavyam hathayoginaa.*

The hathayogi should live alone in a hermitage and practise in a place the length of a bow (one and a half metres) where there is no hazard from rocks, fire or water, and which is in a well-administered and virtuous kingdom (nation or town) where good alms can be easily attained.

It is recommended in the sloka to practise in an area of one and a half metres, where there are no surrounding objects which may cause physical affliction should they be knocked over or disturbed. One should also practise in this same place every day in order to build up the spiritual vibrations. These are the various recommendations stated by the yogis. They are just a matter of common sense and logical thinking rather than rules that must be adhered to.

According to the tradition, what is the ideal environment for sadhana?

Swami Satyananda: Essentially, Yogi Swatmarama recommends a place that is simple, clean, practical and very natural. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:13) he describes the ideal hermitage of a hatha yogi in his time:

*Alpaadvaaramaranghragartavivaram naatyuchchaneechaayatam;
Samyaggomayasaandraliptamamalam nihsheshajantoojjhitam.
Baahye mandapavedikooparuchiram praakaarasamveshitam;
Proktamyogamathasyalakshanamidamsiddhairhathaabhyasibhih.*

This is the description of the yoga hermitage as prescribed by the siddhas for the hatha yoga practitioners. The room of sadhana should have a small door, without aperture (window), holes or cracks, being neither too high nor too low. It should be spotlessly clean, wiped with cow manure and free from animals or insects. Outside there should be an open platform with a thatched roof, a well and a surrounding wall. The appearance of the hermitage should be pleasant.

The recommendation that the sadhana room be kept “spotlessly clean” is as applicable today as it was then. If the mind is to be kept pure and unpolluted, it is essential that the environment be the same. Even the daily act of cleaning purifies the mind.

The sadhana room must be “free from insects and animals”. At the time of sadhana there is nothing more distracting than

mosquitoes, flies or other buzzing, crawling insects. Animals should not be kept in the hermitage as they can be a great disturbance, requiring care, food and extra thought that can distract one's energy from sadhana. Particularly when one first commences sadhana, the mind always looks for an excuse to stop the practices as it resents being centred on one particular point for too long. It will always try to prevent you from coming closer to the object of meditation.

Not only is a fresh water supply essential for good health, but a practitioner of hatha yoga needs pure water for daily purificatory practices as well as for drinking, bathing, toilet, cooking and other activities. Neti, dhauti and kunjla require fresh water, and if you can avoid chlorinated and fluoridated water, these techniques are much more effective.

Apart from this, if the hermitage is enclosed within a wall, its spiritual vibrations and magnetic power can be maintained and negative external influences will not be able to penetrate so easily. Thus a peaceful atmosphere can be maintained.

All these recommendations have been given by yogis who have traversed the spiritual path and experienced the pitfalls and problems a sadhaka is likely to face. It should also be understood that these recommendations have an esoteric meaning as well. They indicate the way a sadhaka should structure himself and his mind. The mind has to be protected from outside influences and the body should have a good defence mechanism. The mind and body must be kept pure, simple and modest, then they will cultivate spiritual vibrations, and conditions will be conducive for the atma to manifest itself.

The structure of the hermitage is an external symbol of one's own self and of what will be achieved through sadhana. Therefore, a sadhaka should try to live as simply and as self-sufficiently as possible. His possessions should be kept to a minimum and his surroundings should always remain uncluttered and clean. Thereby he will have fewer mental distractions and worries and all his energy can be directed towards spiritual unfoldment.

What type of climate is recommended for hatha yoga?

Swami Niranjanananda: According to the rules of the practice of asana, yoga says that they should be performed in a temperature which does not create disturbance in the natural state of the body. The body should not experience the extremities of temperature at the time of asana practice. It should be remembered that the system of yoga evolved in a hot country. Therefore, the tradition is that asana be practised early in the morning when the atmosphere is cool and pleasant. If one tries to apply the same rule in Greenland it will be a bit difficult, there the afternoon would be the most suitable time, unless you are practising in a heated room.

In Srinivasa's *Hatharatnavali* (1:73), Yogi Goroksha is quoted as saying that the hatha yogi should avoid extremes as they create disturbance:

Tathaa gorakshavachanam:

Varjayeddurjanapraantam vahni stree patha sevanam;

Praatasnaanopavaasaadikaayakleshavidhim tathaa.

Then Goroksha spoke:

Wicked company, basking near fire, women, long walking, bathing early in the morning, fasting and doing anything which causes much discomfort to the body are to be avoided.

The aim of asana is to provide relaxation and harmony in the performance and functions of the body. If there are extreme climatic deviations, then the nervous system, the skin and the circulation will be affected, creating further stress in the physical organs, systems and functions. One should use common sense in order to know the proper way to perform asana.

How much emphasis is given to cleanliness as part of hatha yoga sadhana?

Swami Niranjanananda: One rule that is part of both hatha yoga and ashtanga yoga is *shaucha*, cleanliness of the body.

This is a *niyama* or discipline. Cleanliness of the body and cleanliness of the environment in which one lives are necessary to maintain a tranquil mind. One cannot live in a cluttered house or environment and expect to have a sense of mental wellbeing, tranquillity and relaxation. Try to keep everything as clean as possible and try to maintain an orderly system in the house. Don't just throw everything here and there; put it in its proper place. That external discipline induces a sense of internal discipline. The idea of external cleanliness makes one aware of internal cleanliness in the dimension of thought, behaviour and feeling.

The connection between the atmosphere of one's home and the way this supports concentration on *sadhana* is written in *Hatharatnavali* (1:69):

*Evamvidhe mathe sthitvaa sarvachintaavirvaarjatah;
Guroopadeshamaargena yogameva sadaabhyaset.*

Residing in this type of cottage and free from all worries, one should be occupied with yoga and yoga alone, always in the way advised by the guru.

Is living close to nature conducive to hatha yoga practice?

Swami Niranjanananda: A proper locality in which the environment is pure and the air you breathe and the water you drink are unpolluted is important. There should not be a lot of noise pollution either. Try to live in a natural environment as much as possible without any kind of pollution. That natural environment should fulfill all the requirements of water and food. Have a farm where you can grow organic vegetables rather than depending on canned foods or a supermarket, except for a few items. Have plenty of clear spring water.

In the hatha yoga treatises *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, *Gheranda Samhita* and *Goroksha Samhita*, this advice is given. They all state that the house of the hatha yogi should be beside a river where there is plenty of clear water. Every book dealing with hatha yoga has such references in order to inspire

people to lead a natural kind of life, free from pollution and distraction. The environment should be conducive to attaining purity of mind. When you live amongst nature without sounds and noise to distract your attention, you can achieve meditative states easily.

Why can choosing the wrong place to practise be an obstacle to sadhana?

Swami Niranjanananda: In *Gheranda Samhita* it says that sadhana should not be practised in a distant country, forest or in a capital city which has undue light and noise due to the large population. By doing the practices in distant forests, a practitioner will not gain the support of other people. When practising in an overcrowded city, everyone will watch – the point to be borne in mind is that in ancient times it was thought that an ordinary person should not obtain this yogic knowledge. Therefore, the choice of both places was considered wrong. Both an absolutely secluded place and an overcrowded place are prohibited. He says that a new practitioner must observe these rules strictly.

Therefore, Sage Gheranda has instructed that a practitioner should construct a hut in a peaceful spiritual place where food products are easily available and there are no conflicts. It is written in *Gheranda Samhita* (5:3–7):

*Dooradeshe tathaa'ranje raajadhaanyaam janaantike;
Yogaarambham na kurveeta kritashchetsiddhihaa bhavet. (3)*

*Avishvaasam dooradeshe aranje rakshivarjitam;
Lokaaranye prakaashashcha tasmaattreenivivarjayet. (4)*

*Sudeshe dhaarmike raajye subhikshe nirupadrave;
Kritvaa tatraikam kuteeram praacheeraih pariveshtitam. (5)*

*Vaapee koopatadaagam cha praacheera madhyavarti cha;
Naatyuchcham naatinimnam cha kuteeram keetavarjitam. (6)*

*Samyaggomayaliptam cha kuteeram tatra nirmitam;
Evam sthaaneshu gupteshu praanaayaamam samabhyaset. (7)*

Yogic practices should not be done in a faroff place, in a forest, in a capital city or in a crowd, otherwise there will be loss of siddhi, lack of success. (3)

Faroff places are forbidden as no one can be believed in a distant country, a forest is an insecure place, and in a capital city there is excessive population. Therefore, all three places are prohibited for pranayama. (4)

It should be done in a beautiful spiritual region, where food is readily available, and the country is free from internal or external disturbances. Making a hut there, construct a boundary around it. (5)

There should be a well or a water source. The ground on which that hut is constructed should be neither too high nor too low, plastered with cow dung, free from insects and in a secluded place. Pranayama should be practised there. (6-7)

The main requirement of a practitioner is that wherever one lives, there should be enough water – within the boundary wall there should be a well or a small pond for the water supply. Swami Satyananda used to say, “The place does not make any difference. Whether there is a house or trees does not matter, but there should be sufficient water, as water quenches the thirst and pure air flows in the water complex. When air is in contact with water, it causes the humidity and temperature to be favourable.”

The ground on which the hut is constructed should be neither too high nor too low and there should be no animals there. Once again Sage Gheranda is educating aspirants on purity. The place should be plastered with cow dung, which is a pure substance that helps keep away insects and is easily kept clean. There should be no insects, it should be neat and clean, and it should be away from noise and disturbances.

Sage Gheranda gave these instructions according to the needs of that era and the feelings of those people. In the present era when yoga has become quite common, when the population is increasing, and even pilgrimage places are

becoming polluted, the place of practice should be selected with much consideration.

DIET FOR SADHANA

What is a yogic diet?

Swami Sivananda: A yogic diet is that which helps aspirants to keep the mind calm and to curb the restless senses. A yogic diet helps them to squeeze the rajas out of their mind and fill the mind with sattwa, and to practise unceasing meditation. All the senses should be filled with pure material, only then will the mind attain one-pointedness. Only then can one attain self-realization.

The eyes should see the picture of one's chosen deity or any other holy object, the ears should hear the Upanishads, the *Ramayana* or the *Bhagavatam*, the tongue should speak of matters that concern God. These are all pure materials or food for the senses.

What attitude should one have to diet when practising sadhana?

Swami Sivananda: An aspirant should be very careful in the selection of sattwic food, especially in the beginning of his sadhana period. Later on, when perfection is attained, drastic dietetic restrictions can be removed. In *Hatharatnavali* (1:23), this is written:

*Abhyaasakaale prathamē shastam ksheeraadi bhojanam;
Tato'bhyaase dridheebhoote na taavaanniyamagrahah.*

In the beginning of the practice of yoga food with milk, etc. is advised. But when the practice has stabilized there is no need to observe such a restriction.

Purity of food leads to purity of the mind. Sattwic food helps meditation. The discipline of food is very necessary for the successful practice of yogic sadhana. If the palate is controlled, all the other senses are also controlled.

Do not make much fuss about diet. It is not necessary to advertise that one is able to persevere with a particular diet. The observance of such restraints is for personal advancement on the spiritual path and there is no spiritual benefit in giving publicity to one's form of sadhana.

Live a natural, simple life. One should take simple food that is wholly agreeable to one's system. Each person should have their own menu to suit their constitution. The individual is the best judge when selecting a sattvic diet. There should be no craving for any particular diet. Do not become a slave of this food or that food. A simple, natural, non-stimulating, tissue-building, energy-producing diet, free from alcohol, will keep the mind calm and pure and help in yoga practices.

How is diet related to the mental states and the gunas?

Swami Satyananda: A diet that is wholly conducive to the practice of yoga is called a yogic diet. One's diet has an intimate connection with the mind. There are three kinds of diet: sattvic diet, rajasic diet and tamasic diet. Milk, barley, wheat, cereals, butter, cheese, tomatoes, honey, dates, fruits, almonds and sugar-candy are all sattvic foodstuffs. They render the mind pure and kind. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (17:8) it is written:

*Aayusattvabalaarogyasukhapreetivivardhanaah;
Rasyaah snigdhaah sthiraah hridyaa aahaaraah saattvikapriyaah.*

Foods which increase life, purity, strength, health, joy and cheerfulness, which are oleaginous and savoury, suitable and agreeable, are dear to the sattvic people.

Fish, eggs, meat, salt, chillies and asafoetida are rajasic foodstuffs. They excite passion. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (17:9) it is written:

*Katvamlalavanaatyushnateekshnarookshavidaahinah;
Aahaaraa raajasasyeshtaa duhkhashokaamayapradaah.*

The foods that are bitter, sour, saline, excessively hot, dry, pungent and burning, are liked by the rajasic and are productive of pain, grief and disease.

Beef, wine, garlic, onions and tobacco are tamasic foodstuffs. They fill the mind with anger, darkness and inertia. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (17:10) it is written:

*Yaatayaamam gatarasam pooti paryushitam cha yat;
Uchchhishtamapi chaamedhyam bhojanam taamasapriyam.*

That which is stale, tasteless, putrid, rotten and impure refuse, is the food liked by the tamasic.

A vegetarian diet has been acclaimed to be the most conducive to spiritual and psychic advancement.

How important is dietary regulation for success in hatha yoga sadhana?

Swami Satyananda: The most important attribute of the diet is that it should nourish the dhatus. There are seven *dhatus* or basic body structures: skin, flesh, blood, bone, marrow, fat and semen or ova. Anything which destroys their natural balance should not be taken. The traditional texts on hatha yoga all give dietary advice. *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:63) recommends:

*Pushtam sumadhuram snigdam gavyam dhaatupraposhanam;
Manobhilashitam योग्यं योगे भोजनामाचरेत्.*

The yogi should take nourishing and sweet food mixed with ghee and milk; it should nourish the dhatus and be pleasing and suitable.

Although milk and ghee are recommended, large quantities should not be taken. Too much milk creates a mucus problem and if one has an allergic reaction to milk it should not be taken. Excess ghee is stored in the body as fat. If rice creates swelling in the abdomen or fluid retention, leave it.

“Pleasing and suitable”, means food which suits the individual body metabolism and which makes one feel healthy, mentally content and stable. Diet differs according to each individual, so it is best to experiment with different foods and quantities in order to find the correct diet.

Why is one’s diet and attitude to food a part of sadhana?

Swami Satyananda: Many people indulge in food as a means of escape for the mind. When they are tense, frustrated or insecure they eat to relieve the problem. A yogi should always regard food as a medicine which will purify and fuel the body and mind for the maintenance of life and progress in sadhana. Thus at all times he will eat cautiously, with awareness and with a higher purpose than sensual pleasure. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:58) the importance of one’s approach to eating is emphasized:

*Susnigdhamadhuraahaarashchaturthaamshavivarjitah;
Bhujyate shivasampreetyai mitaahaarah sa uchyate.*

Mitahara is defined as agreeable and sweet food, leaving one fourth of the stomach free, and eaten as an offering to please Shiva.

Mitahara means sattvic food, light food which is easy to digest. “Sweet food” means fresh, pleasant tasting food, not particularly that which has extra sugar. Food which is disagreeable means that it is either bad tasting, poisonous to the system or not agreeable to one’s metabolism. The stomach should never be overloaded, it should be half filled with food, one quarter with water and one quarter with air. Eating “to please Shiva” means that when taking food the yogi should not feel that he is eating for himself, he should cultivate the attitude that he is nourishing the body for its maintenance so his consciousness can continue its process of unfoldment and spiritual evolution.

Shiva is the inner consciousness, the *atma*. Everything the yogi eats should be considered as *prasad* or an offering from

the Supreme Being. This is very important for eradicating the sense of ego: 'I want' and 'I eat'. Food is not taken for sense gratification but to sustain the vehicle of the indweller, the *atma*. Therefore, eating should be considered as part of one's *sadhana*. Life itself is a *sadhana*.

What specific foods are recommended for those undertaking *sadhana*?

Swami Satyananda: In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* and in *Gheranda Samhita* specific foods are recommended. Of course, it has to be taken into consideration that the diet given here is suitable for the climate and environmental conditions of India. It is also the diet of the *hatha yogi* who is devoted to many hours of constant *sadhana*, and not of those who do a one hour yoga class once a week and have other household commitments. Nevertheless, most of the foods mentioned are available all over the world, and even if one is a householder, such a diet will help purify the body and stabilize the mind and passions.

The foods recommended by Yogi Swatmarama in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:62) are:

*Godhoomashaaliyavashaashtikashobhanaa
ksheeraajyakhandanavaneetasitaamadhooni;
Shuntheepatolakaphalaadikapanchashaakammudgaadidivya-
mudakancha yameendrapathyam.*

Good grains, wheat, rice, barley, milk, ghee, brown sugar, sugar candy (crystallized sugar), honey, dry ginger, patola fruit (species of cucumber), five vegetables, mung and such pulses, and pure water.

Whole grains and rice supply essential carbohydrates and vitamin B complex. Fresh milk and ghee maintain the mucous lining of the digestive tract and alimentary canal which is washed away by *shatkarma* practices, and neutralize any acidity or heat in the stomach which the practices may create. Sugar is necessary for brain functioning as well as

other body functions. Honey is recommended as it is a predigested and whole food. Dried ginger is also agreeable.

In *Gheranda Samhita* (5:20) the “five vegetables” are said to be balashaka, kalashaka, patolapatraka, vashtaka and himalochika. These are leafy vegetables which are similar to spinach. Light, easily digestible pulses such as mung and red lentils are recommended as they supply protein, but pulses and gram such as horse gram, which are hard to digest and create flatulence, are to be avoided. Pure water which is free of chemicals, excess minerals and harmful bacteria is essential, particularly for the purification practices.

Which foods should be avoided in hatha yoga sadhana?

Swami Satyananda: A yogi’s diet should be simple and bland. Anything that is highly concentrated, causes acidity in the stomach and overheats the whole system should be avoided. This includes greasy, spicy and stale foods. Foods which create toxins and putrefy in the intestines, such as meat, should definitely be avoided. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:59) certain foods are prohibited for the yogi:

Katvamlateekshnalavanoshnahareetashaakasauveeratailatilasarshapa madyamatsyaan;

Ajaadimaamsadadhitakrakulatthakolapinyaakahingulashu-naadyamapathyamaahuh.

The foods which are prohibited (for the yogi) are: those which are bitter, sour, pungent, salty, heating, green vegetables (other than those ordained), sour gruel, oil, sesame and mustard, alcohol, fish, flesh foods, curds, buttermilk, horse gram, fruit of jujube, oil cakes, asafoetida and garlic.

Asafoetida and garlic are considered aphrodisiacs as they supposedly stimulate the production of sex hormones. Of course, they are not harmful and in small quantities they are medicinal, but they are strong and leave an odour in the body. In particular, it is said that garlic should not be taken

at night as it arouses sexual fantasies. One who is trying to maintain awareness of the higher aspects of reality should refrain from taking such substances until he is established in that state of awareness.

Alcohol should surely be avoided, not specifically because it intoxicates the mind, but more for the reason that it destroys the liver and brain cells. In hatha yoga one aims to maintain and sustain the body, thus alcoholic substances are better left untouched.

In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:60) further instruction is given:

*Bhojanamahitam vidyaatpunarasyoshneekritam rooksham;
Atilavanamamlayuktam kadashanashaakotkatam varjyam.*

Unhealthy diet should not be taken, that which is reheated after becoming cold, which is dry (devoid of natural oil), which is excessively salty or acidic, stale or has too many (mixed) vegetables.

When food is cooked and again reheated after it has gone cold, bacterial growth has already set in, and if this food is eaten it creates fermentation in the stomach, resulting in indigestion, wind and acidity. Dry food means that which has absolutely no natural oil or water left in it. Oil is necessary in minimum quantities. Excess salt and acidity imbalance the system, in fact, salt directly affects the heart rate. If salt is taken in excess it makes the heart beat faster and heats the body.

Many different types of vegetables should not be cooked together as the resulting chemical reactions can upset the digestive system and disturb body functions. Digestion should always be a quick and smooth process which does not overstrain or overheat the system, and prana should not be wasted on digestion.

Why is it best to eat only seasonal food?

Swami Niranjanananda: Practitioners of hatha yoga should eat a moderate, balanced diet, otherwise the full benefit of the practices will not be derived. Also, eating unsuitable

food leads to the possibility of physical ailments. In *Gheranda Samhita*, Sage Gheranda says that a practitioner who undertakes yoga without moderating the diet suffers from many diseases and does not make progress in yoga.

The sages have thoughtfully prescribed some dietary rules from ancient times and wherever discussion about diet or food takes place, these rules about which vegetables or fruits should be taken during monsoon or winter are considered. Thus for each season a different type of food is recommended. These rules are particularly observed in villages. In the modern era, with refrigeration, people have begun keeping and preserving out of season vegetables and fruits, but according to yoga, consuming out of season food has detrimental effects on the body. In *Gheranda Samhita*, Sage Gheranda also says that a sadhaka should eat less and should consume a balanced diet.

Is the temperature of food and its affect on the doshas considered by hatha yogis?

Swami Niranjanananda: In *Gheranda Samhita* (5:23–31) Sage Gheranda declares that it is not beneficial for yogis to eat cold or very hot foods, which cause extreme changes in body temperature. Here it should be mentioned for today's students that chilled water should not be drunk immediately after pranayama or dynamic exercise, or on coming in from the sun. Water should be normal temperature, not chilled. It should be left at least five to ten minutes if it has been chilled. This is recommended in order to maintain normal body temperature.

Sage Gheranda also says that a pranayama practitioner should avoid certain foods which tend to increase *pitta*, acidity, or produce gas. These include sour, acidic, over-salted and fried foods. In describing such rules Sage Gheranda says that *vata*, gas, *pitta*, heat and *kapha*, mucus, related to the digestive system, should be kept under control and not aggravated. Milk produces kapha, so here the normal idea that yogis should drink a lot of milk is overturned. He has

permitted *ghee*, clarified butter, but not butter, as ghee is made by heating butter and skimming off its white foam so that only pure ghee remains. The foam in butter hides the sour taste which increases acidity or pitta in the body.

Finally, Sage Gheranda says that milk can be taken. First he has forbidden the drinking of milk and then he says that milk can be taken along with food. From this it can be inferred that milk should probably not be taken on an empty stomach. Milk is digested when taken with food and does not remain inside the stomach. If it is taken at night before sleeping, it remains in the stomach and the nutritional elements of the milk are not digested properly due to the dominance of the parasympathetic nervous system.

To summarize, food should be easily digestible, light and energy producing. After eating, the stomach should not feel heavy or the body lethargic. A yogi should observe these main rules.

How essential is a good diet in the practice of hatha yoga?

Swami Niranjanananda: A proper diet which is pure, simple and as natural as possible is essential for progress in hatha yoga. If one eats pure food, the system is revitalized again and again. It is like the theory, “feed the earth and the earth will feed you.” Feed the body so that the body feeds you, but do not overload it. Feed the body with pure foods in a disciplined and regulated way. Yoga has very definite ideas about eating habits and how they affect the digestive system.

In day-to-day life, people often go to the kitchen for snacks. They eat snacks all day long, whether it is a piece of cake, a cookie, a sweet or something else. Each time food is eaten, even if it is only a tiny grain of rice, it has to be digested. Unfortunately the stomach does not measure the quantity of food that has been put into it. It will secrete the same quantity of digestive juices each time something is dropped in, whether it is a snack or a large meal. If a full meal is eaten once or twice a day, so that the digestive

juices flow only once or twice, the digestive system retains its strength and vitality. But if snacks are eaten twenty times a day, requiring a continuous secretion of enzymes, the stomach is overworked and the digestive prana depleted. This misuse of the digestive system is experienced later in the form of digestive ailments or other diseases.

Therefore, yoga advises structured, disciplined habits in relation to food and diet. Whether one eats five times a day, three times a day or once in a day, try to maintain that routine throughout life. Do not misuse the digestive system by eating irregularly and overloading the stomach.

Is fasting a part of purifying the body in hatha yoga?

Swami Satyananda: The hatha yoga techniques purify the body so thoroughly that if they are practised regularly it is not necessary to undergo fasting. The hatha yogi should eat regular meals and not make a habit of fasting often. Nevertheless, fasting is useful to stimulate the digestive system, to eliminate toxins and to help bring the senses and mind under control. In sickness it stimulates the body to produce the necessary antibodies to fight disease and rebalance the body structure.

In India many people follow the age-old tradition of fasting in conjunction with the phases of the moon. There are particular days which are conducive for either a full or half day fast, such as the fourth, ninth, eleventh, fourteenth and fifteenth day of either the bright or dark fortnight. Swami Sivananda says, "Occasional fasting once a month or when passion troubles you much, will suffice."

Though fasting has a lot to offer and many people advocate it, one who devotes many hours to hatha yoga sadhana should not strain the body in such a way. For this reason, *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:61) and *Hatharatnavali* (1:73) specifically advise that fasting should be avoided. Any actions which are strenuous and create pain or extreme conditions in the body should not be undertaken by the yogi. Without being fanatical, one should take proper care of the body and

avoid any unnecessary strain or injury, as the body is the vehicle to higher consciousness. Of course, one has to be sensible about all these instructions and take into account the situation and conditions.

Nevertheless, I have found that a little fasting from time to time is very beneficial to those who want to practise traditional yoga.



9

The Sadhaka

QUALITIES FOR SUCCESS

What does a student of hatha yoga need for success?

Swami Sivananda: At the most a simple, soft blanket is needed to practise asanas on. One does not practise asanas and pranayamas in order to gain big muscles. Muscles do not mean health. The healthy and harmonious functioning of the endocrine glands and the internal organs, and more so of the nervous system and the mind, are needed, and this is what regular practice of yogasanas and pranayama will bestow.

For this purpose it is good to possess a few internal accessories for the practice of these wonderful exercises.

1. An abiding faith in God and a great love for the repetition of His name. Contemplation on God and mentally uttering His name while practising the asanas, and particularly pranayama, will greatly enhance their value and utility.
2. Punctuality and regularity. Nothing is ever achieved by those who are unpunctual and irregular. What he gains when he practises he loses when he does not. And he loses, moreover, the very tendency to practise! Practise for five minutes a day, but never miss a day's practice. In due time it will be realized that these five minutes have greatly enriched the rest of the day's activity. This will bring motivation to increase the period of practice.

3. *Brahmacharya*, celibacy: A bachelor should not even entertain lustful thoughts. A householder should exercise as much control as possible over sex-relations. Then maximum benefits will be derived from these asanas and pranayamas. The practices themselves help one maintain brahmacharya.
4. Sincerity, earnestness and zeal are the three great qualities that will soon transform one into a great yogi. Even if these practices are taken up for the sake of health and a long life, the practitioner will soon aspire to realize God through them if he is sincere, earnest and zealous. In *Hatharatnavali* (1:78) it is written:

*Utsaahaannishchalaaddhairyaattattvajnaanaartha darshanaat;
Bindusthairyaanmitaahaaraajjanasanga vivarjanaat.
Nidraatyagaat jitashvaasaat peethasthairyaadanaalasaat;
Gurvaachaaryaprasaadaachcha ebhiryogastu siddhyati.*

Yoga is successfully attained by following these things: effort, steadiness, perseverance, correct understanding of philosophy, stability of semen, controlled diet, abandoning public contact, giving up sleep, control over breathing, keeping oneself firm in tradition, abandoning laziness, and by the favour (kindness) of guru and acharya.

How can resistance to doing sadhana be overcome?

Swami Sivananda: Sadhana is at first mechanical and it is only in the later stages that it becomes part and parcel of one's life. It may appear as drudgery in the beginning, but later on it imparts joy, peace, strength, courage and freedom.

What personal qualities are needed for success in sadhana?

Swami Satyananda: Yogi Swatmarama is very clear about the qualities needed for success in hatha yoga. These six qualities are listed in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:16i):

*Utsaahaatsaahasaaddhairyaattattvajnaanaashcha nishchayaat;
Janasangaparityaagaatshadbhiryogah prasiddhyati.*

Enthusiasm, perseverance, discrimination, unshakeable faith, courage and avoiding the company of common people, are the six which bring success in yoga.

To succeed in yoga, enthusiasm, or it could be said, 'a positive attitude', is absolutely essential. Constant inspiration and the ideal of attaining perfection generate energy and help to maintain regularity in practice. Every day should seem like the first day of practice. The same zeal should exist between a sadhaka and his sadhana as between a newly wed couple. Then the sadhana will be invigorating and exciting. This spontaneously generates perseverance.

No matter what happens externally, rain, hail or shine, sadhana must be done regularly. Whether one is afflicted with material losses or acquires valuable possessions, whether there are visible signs of progress in one's sadhana or not, the effort of sadhana must continue. Even if one has practised for fifteen years, one must continue until the final goal is reached. It may take only one more month of practice, or it may take a whole lifetime. Everybody evolves at a different rate, so it is useless to compare oneself with others. No matter what, the attitude should always be optimistic.

Discrimination is the third prerequisite for success in yoga. Everything that is done and every aspect of one's life, including the diet, clothing, company, material necessities and conversations, should be conducive to sadhana. If something is going to be detrimental, leave it.

Unshakeable faith in guru and the ultimate truth or reality is the most important tool for a sadhaka. If one doubts the guru, how can there be success in what he has taught? If faith is lost in the guru, there is no hope for success in yoga. Absolute faith in whatever he says and does is the only key to unlock the door to higher experience. One may doubt one's own ability to achieve, but if there is faith in guru and he says you can move a mountain, you will do it. Even if faith in guru and the ultimate goal is the only thing in one's favour, that person will surely succeed.

Courage is also recommended for fulfilling yoga, courage to face the inner visions and realizations as they dawn. Courage, perseverance and faith go hand-in-hand, not only in the face of internal hardships, but the external ones also. During the period of sadhana it can be detrimental to mix with people who have lower aspirations. At that stage, the less one is involved with others the more the inner knowledge can grow. Of course, a sadhaka should not consider the others to be inferior, but until his physical, mental, emotional and psychic resistance have developed, it is better to stay away from social interactions and negative influences.

These six factors can be cultivated anywhere, whether living in a city with your family or alone in a hermitage. A householder should modify them to suit his lifestyle.

What attitude should one cultivate towards sadhana?

Swami Satyananda: Once while performing sadhana, I felt a sort of egoistic notion that, “I am doing sadhana for God-realization.” But after deep thinking I realized that it is the will of God and I am only an instrument. Why then run after sadhana or realization? So I gave up everything. Again after deep thinking, I realized my mistake. It was totally wrong to give up sadhana, as thereafter my mind began to play its wicked tricks again, causing agony, misery and anger. Therefore, to control the mind and win over its wayward tendencies, one has to practise sadhana.

Due to sadhana the mind becomes calm and quiet. Once the mind is controlled the aspirant realizes that a divine power is causing him to do sadhana, and finally knows that God and himself are one and the same. Therefore, sadhana should be performed without ego and with the feeling that one is doing sadhana only as an instrument in the hands of a divine power. Always have the feeling that you are performing asanas, pranayamas and meditation as an instrument, that you are only playing the role of a sadhaka. We have to face many problems in daily life such as anger, displeasure and insults, which cause depression, frustration

and helplessness, but these are illusionary, an outward imaginary play of the mind. Hence to pacify and control the mind, sadhana is absolutely necessary.

The next important point is that one should like sadhana to the highest extent. Just as a mother becomes disturbed if her child does not return home on time, so the aspirant should become disturbed if he does not do his daily practices. You should love your practices as much as you love your body. The practices can produce the desired result only if they are done willingly, with love and attraction. There should be no feeling of compulsion. If one has these qualities, earnestness, respect and devotion, good results are assured.

Is hatha yoga suitable for everyone?

Swami Niranjanananda: A story is told in *Gheranda Samhita* (1:1–3). A king goes to Sage Gheranda with a question:

*Ekadaa chandakaapaalirgatvaa gherandakuttiram;
Pranamya vinayaadbhaktiyaa gherandam pariprichchhati.
Ghatasthayogam yogesha tattvajnaanasya kaaranam;
Idaaneem shrotumichchhaami yogeshvara vada prabho.*

Once King Chandakapali went to the hermitage of Sage Gheranda and, after prostrating before him with due humility and devotion, asked him a question. (1)

O Yogeshwara, god of yoga! I wish to learn ghatastha yoga, which is a means to self-realization. O Yogeshwara! O Lord! Kindly tell me about this. (2)

Sage Gheranda is acknowledged as *Yogeshwara*; he is addressed by the king as the founder of yoga, the god of yoga and the teacher of yoga. King Chandakapali then asks Sage Gheranda to explain to him the teachings of ghatastha yoga, by which a person can attain self-realization.

The king is accepted as a disciple, showing that Sage Gheranda has ignored an old belief. In that age it was not the normal practice for worldly people and householders

to be desirous of yogic practices, self-realization and knowledge of the self. This path was meant only for saints and sannyasins. Here, however, a king has come for spiritual knowledge. Sage Gheranda said:

*Saadhu saadhu mahaabaaho yanmaam tvam pariprichchasi;
Kathayaami cha te vatsa saavadhaano'vadhaaraya.*

O, Mahabaho! I appreciate your question. O dear child, I will explain to you the subject you are keen to learn about. Listen carefully to acquire this knowledge. (3)

The king has been addressed as *Mahabaho*, which has several meanings such as 'He who has power in his arms', 'He who protects his people and looks after them'. The king was a king, of course, and a householder as well, yet he was also a *mumukshu*, a seeker of liberation. He had the desire to attain *moksha*, liberation, so he came to the sage seeking knowledge of yoga.

This verse tells us that everyone is suitable for yoga. *Saadhu saadhu mahaabaaho*, Sage Gheranda says, "It is very good that you have adopted this path. You have expressed your aim, and knowledge of yoga is imparted to one who is eager to know himself. A yogi is one who attains truth and knowledge, whose foremost aim is to gain knowledge and understand the inner truth, whether he is a householder, saint or sannyasin."

A common definition of *yoga* is union between the individual consciousness and the cosmic consciousness. In this process a human being first becomes a *sadhaka*, not a *yogi*. The four stages are: *jignasu*, seeker, *sadhaka*, devotee, *yogi*, a person who performs *purushartha* and *sadhana* in order to know himself, and *jivanmukta*, liberated soul. Curiosity arises in everyone's mind. Every human being at some time or other wonders about the purpose of life, but due to disinclination or aversion, the quest is usually forgotten. Some, however, keep the aim in mind and perform their *sadhana*; they comprise the *sadhaka* group.

King Chandakapali appears before Sage Gheranda as a devotee, as a seeker. Sage Gheranda is a yogi, who explains to him the path of yoga.

Are the qualities needed for success in hatha yoga developed by the sadhana which the classical tradition recommends?

Swami Niranjanananda: In *Gheranda Samhita* (1:9) Sage Gheranda says that it is essential to possess seven qualities for the practice of ghatastha yoga, and to acquire them seven types of yogic practices are important.

*Shodhanam dridhataa chaiva sthairyam dhairyam cha laghavam;
Pratyaksham cha nirliptam cha ghatastha saptasadhanam.*

Purification, firmness, steadiness, patience, lightness, inner perception and non-involvement are the seven sadhanas for the ghata.

In raja yoga Sage Patanjali describes *ashtanga yoga*, the eight limbs of yoga, known as yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi. By describing these seven sadhanas, Sage Gheranda has taken the basic elements of ashtanga yoga and described them in the form of seven needs.

The first is *shodhanam*, which means purification. In order to make the body and mind free from disease and disorders, purification is very important.

The second is *dridhata*, meaning firm or unshaken. Some people understand this to mean power or energy and others consider it to mean mental force. The purpose for which it has been used here is not only physical, but mental, intellectual and emotional as well.

Consider the attempts made during practice sessions to make the body strong and steady, the efforts made to bring clarity to the thinking process. With firmness and the power of resolve one attempts to make life complete. In the same manner, Sage Gheranda says that it is important for a person

to achieve the quality of firmness in order to purify the self, and to keep on practising patiently. Here *dridhata* could mean moving with a *sankalpa*, adopting a resolution and remaining firm in it.

The third quality is *sthairyam*, steadiness. In his *Yoga Sutras* (2:46) Sage Patanjali has described steadiness pertaining to the body:

Sthirasukhamaasanam.

Steady and comfortable should be the posture.

During the practice of asana a person should remain steady. There should be no difficulty, tension or pain. Asanas should be performed in a relaxed manner. The same objective is given here. It is essential to achieve physical steadiness as if the body is restless, it will not allow the mind to be one-pointed. Steadiness is seen in the form of a quality or need. How to attain this state of steadiness will be explained later.

The fourth means is *dhairyam*, patience. It is also a quality which means one remains unaffected by situations, does not lose patience, does not become distressed, does not lose tolerance. It is a mental quality, as it is the mind, not the body, which loses patience.

The fifth means or need is *laghavam*, lightness. In the context of normal life and the qualities needed for yoga, a yogi's body should remain light. It should not be too heavy, or have fat. A fat body is not considered suitable for yoga as it is believed that being overweight is a cause of disease. It does not mean, however, that people who are fat cannot become yogis.

Fat is caused by uncontrolled eating, which leads to a build up of bodily disorders. Excessive weight can cause joint discomfort, heart problems or high blood pressure. As the conditions compound, a person becomes more susceptible to other problems, including ulcers, hernia and other illnesses. Therefore, it is essential for a yoga practitioner to

have a light body in the beginning, otherwise yoga cannot be perfected.

Once yoga is perfected and one goes beyond the experience of the body, one does not have to worry about the physical state. In fact, often when pranic energy arises, it concentrates at manipura chakra and the abdomen grows. Such yogis eat hardly any heavy food, such as ghee. Many only eat fruits. In such yogis the expansion of manipura chakra is the awakening of prana, it is not a disorder in the body. Therefore, it can be observed that many accomplished saints or yogis have big bellies. In the beginning, however, the body should be thin.

Pratyaksha is the sixth quality. Here *pratyaksha* does not refer to the pratyaksha of Samkhya philosophy, but to the nature of acceptance, that is, whatever subtle or internal experiences there are must be kept clear before the inner mental vision. Pratyaksham comes from *prati*, a prefix indicating the opposite or confrontation to the word it precedes, and *aksham*, meaning eyes, to see.

This state of pratyaksha is not the state of *laya*, dissolution, where one does not see anything. Neither is it a state of sensual experience. On the contrary, it is a state in which one sees an inner experience, feels it and establishes oneself in it.

Let us take an example from normal life. Imagine putting a *rasgulla*, a sweet made from cheese and syrup, in the mouth. Now close the eyes and experience its taste while eating it. The taste of cheese will vanish, the taste of syrup will disappear, and only one taste will remain, which is neither cheese nor syrup. With the experience of this taste, one will exclaim, "It is so delicious!" 'Delicious' refers not to cheese or syrup, but to the taste of the rasgulla, that third element which has been created through the union of both cheese and syrup. It is subtle, it cannot be seen. It is not experienced in cheese or in syrup, but it is present and is experienced within. If one brings forth this experience, that is pratyaksha or acceptance.

The seventh quality is *nirlipta*. Many people understand nirlipta to mean samadhi, but the true sense of the word is a state of disinterest, a state of being unattached, of non-involvement of the mind. Being involved is what happens when a fly goes deep into raw sugar, immerses its wings, and is unable to get out. Nirlipta is when the mind is not involved. Until this point one is always attached to life, the body, thinking, emotion, passion and disorder. One must go beyond this continuous attachment to become established in self-knowledge, which is a state of non-involvement, free from the gravitational force which attracts us to the world.

According to Sage Gheranda, for a devotee these seven qualities are essential: purification, firmness, steadiness, patience, lightness of body, the nature of acceptance and non-involvement. In order to incorporate these seven qualities, there are seven types of yogic practices, which are listed in *Gheranda Samhita* (1:10–11) and which the book goes on to describe in detail:

*Shatkarmanaa shodhanam cha aasanena bhaveddridham;
Mudrayaa sthirataa chaiva pratyahaarena dheerataa.*

*Praanaayaamaallaaghavam cha dhyanaatpratyakshamaatmanah;
Samaadhinaa nirliptam cha muktireva na samshayah.*

Through shatkarmas purification of the body is achieved, through asanas firmness, through mudras steadiness and through pratyahara, patience is achieved. (10)

Through pranayama agility or lightness is achieved, through meditation self-realization and through samadhi non-involvement or detachment and undoubtedly, liberation, are achieved. (11)

OBSTACLES TO SADHANA

Can one fail at sadhana?

Swami Sivananda: Do not be slack in sadhana. It is sadhana that will help in the long run. It is the only asset in this life.

Be regular in sadhana and attain self-realization in this very birth. Never mind repeated failures in sadhana. Nil desperandum, despair not. Do not give up the struggle or the sadhana. Stand up and fight again. Struggle again. Each time brings one nearer to success. Every failure is a stepping stone to success.

Why are siddhis considered obstacles to success in yoga?

Swami Sivananda: On the appearance of certain siddhis a yogi may think that he has achieved the highest goal. He may give up his further sadhana through false contentment. The yogi who is bent upon attaining the highest samadhi, must reject siddhis whenever they come. Siddhis are invitations from devatas. Only by rejecting these siddhis can one attain success in yoga. He who craves for siddhis is a worldly-minded man. He is a very big householder. Those who crave for siddhis will never get them. If a yogic student is tempted to attain siddhis, his further progress is seriously retarded. He has lost the way.

Do not stop sadhana when a few glimpses and experiences are had. Continue the practice until you attain perfection. Do not stop the practice and move about in the world. Examples are not lacking. Numerous persons have been ruined. A glimpse cannot give safety.

What are the obstacles to progress?

Swami Satyananda: According to hatha yoga there are six major factors which prevent yoga, or union, from occurring. In hatha yoga, union means uniting the two energy forces in the body – that is, the pranic and mental energy flowing in pingala and ida nadis. Hatha yoga is the process of balancing the flow of these two alternating forces to bring perfect physical and mental equilibrium and awakening of sushumna and kundalini. When a sadhaka is in the process of uniting the two opposite forces of ida and pingala, he must avoid all activities which waste energy and distract the mind. Therefore, in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:15) it is written:

*Atyaahaarah prayaasshva prajalpo niyamagrahah;
Janasangashcha laulyam cha shadbhiryogo vinashyati.*

Overeating, exertion, talkativeness, adhering to rules, being in the company of common people and unsteadiness (wavering mind) are the six (causes) which destroy yoga.

One major obstacle to yoga, or union, is overeating. When the body is overloaded with food, it becomes sluggish and the mind becomes dull. Over a period of time toxins build up in the body, constipation sets in and the whole physical and mental system becomes blocked. If the body is toxic and lethargic, how can one expect to make progress in sadhana? Whatever sadhana is done will act as a purification, so the sadhana time will just be spent removing toxins and disease. If overeating and its consequences are avoided, however, the sadhana will help one to progress more quickly. Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh and many other yogis have said that the stomach should be half filled with food, one quarter with water and one quarter with air.

The next advice is that the hatha yogi should avoid over-exerting or over-straining the body and mind. Hard physical labour or intense mental work taxes the energy system concerned and can create further imbalance between the two energies. The hatha yogi has to conserve and build up his store of energy for spiritual purposes and should not waste it in performing any unnecessary physical or mental feats.

Too much talking dissipates vital energy and wastes time which could be better spent in awakening the inner awareness. Gossiping with people who have low morals, base consciousness and sensuous desires cannot enlighten one's soul, rather, their negative vibrations may have an influence. Social situations and irrelevant discussions definitely distract the mind from sadhana.

Although Yogi Swatmarama advises that a sadhaka should not adhere to strict rules and regulations, the guru's instructions must be followed. As far as social rituals and religious doctrines are concerned, it is unnecessary that

they be maintained for spiritual progress. Sadhana is not dependent on social morals nor are its effects promoted by religious practices. Adhering to rules makes one narrow minded. Yoga is meant to expand the consciousness, not to limit it. A yogi should have a free and open mind. If one is accustomed to taking a cold bath every morning before practice, and one day there is no water, the practitioner should not be disturbed. Take a bath when water is available. The mind should be flexible and able to adjust to circumstances.

Unsteadiness means an imbalanced body metabolism, inability to hold one posture for a period of time and a wavering mind. Obviously yoga cannot be achieved under these conditions. When there is physical, mental, emotional and psychic imbalance, the energy is dispersed, but if the energy is properly channeled all the bodily systems become stable, and physical and mental steadiness develop automatically. Unsteadiness also means wavering willpower, such as rising at three a.m. one day, and sleeping in until seven the next morning due to feeling lazy. When there is inconsistency and irregularity in lifestyle, further imbalance in the body will ensue. An unswerving mind and a steady body cultivate yoga.

If one can live in a hermitage all these obstacles will be avoided naturally. If it is not possible to live in such a place, however, one must try to develop the habit of avoiding all activities which are useless, time consuming and energy depleting, and channel all the desires and actions into spiritual ventures. Apart from these obstacles, the *Tantraraja Tantra* mentions that the six obstacles to yoga are *kama*, lust, *krodha*, anger, *lobha*, greed, *moha*, infatuation, *abhimana*, pride, and *mada*, arrogance. The six obstacles described in hatha yoga and in tantra are interwoven and interlinked.

Does hatha yoga mean giving up the pleasures of life?

Swami Satyananda: If you want to achieve transcendental experience, the practices of hatha yoga and pranayama

should be perfected. The rules and recommendations should also be observed. This does not mean giving up all the pleasures in life, but as you well know, you can never have your cake and eat it too. With the decision to step into another dimension of consciousness, one must be ready to sacrifice some of those things which are definitely detrimental to the practice of pranayama and hatha yoga. Therefore, remember that the practices of hatha yoga, asana and pranayama are ultimately intended for developing the quality of human consciousness, not just the mind or body.

How can the willpower to maintain regular sadhana be developed?

Swami Niranjanananda: Slow and steady wins the race. Development of willpower takes time, as first one must become used to all the eccentricities of the mind and personality. Willpower is a state of mind which is one-pointed, awake and alert. Dissipated states of mind are unbalanced. When the mind is balanced, willpower will open up from within, without having to make any conscious effort.

If one decides to do sadhana, whether it is asana, pranayama or meditation, it is not necessary to start with one hour of practice every day. Begin with ten minutes and increase every week by one minute, two minutes, five minutes, over a period of several months. Increase to half an hour and leave it at that. Within this thirty-minute period outline a program of, for example, ten minutes asana, five minutes pranayama, fifteen minutes meditation – no more and no less. This will be enough.

When one wants to attain something, it is only necessary to do the specific sadhana which will help with attainment of that goal. If this sadhana is pursued regularly and religiously, making it a firm daily habit, over a period of time enough willpower will develop to take up any other sadhana. It is just a process of habituation.

YAMA AND NIYAMA

Are yama and niyama given in hatha yoga?

Swami Satyananda: Ten rules of conduct and ten observances called yama and niyama are listed in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, while *Hatharatnavali* says there are fifteen yama and twelve niyama, and the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali lists five of each. But hatha yoga does not place much emphasis on them.

Sage Patanjali's raja yoga claims that yama and niyama must be practised before commencing hatha yoga. It says, control the mind and then purify the body, but in this day and age too many problems can arise if an aspirant comes into direct confrontation with his mind at the beginning of his spiritual quest. It is like running from a den of lions into a cage of tigers. Therefore, in hatha yoga the whole system has been designed for the people of the kali yuga. Hatha yoga commences with purification of the body, the shatkarnas, then come asana and pranayama. Yama and niyama can be practised later when the mind has become stable and its outward-going tendencies can be more easily controlled.

In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, Yogi Swatmarama is merely listing what is required of a sadhaka at a later stage of practice. He has mentioned the ways in which yoga can be enhanced and the factors that can lead to failure. The yama and niyama are given to verify why he states these causes, so there may be a little repetition on certain points. Yogi Swatmarama also advises "not to adhere to rules." Yama and niyama are rules, and to an extent they are also moral codes. Initially, it is not essential to practise these and it should not be thought that you cannot succeed without them. The yama and niyama have been given as guidelines to keep a sadhaka on the path.

In this day and age it may be difficult to try and force oneself to keep to these rules, therefore, hatha yoga does not stress their importance. They can, however, be cultivated with sadhana and spiritual endeavour. The mind should never be forced to accept something which feels unnatural. When it

comes spontaneously there will be no suppression. If one forces oneself to do something which is going against one's nature, all sorts of psychological complications develop. Keep the yamas and niyamas in mind and let them develop naturally.

What are the yamas of hatha yoga?

Swami Satyananda: Ten yamas are listed in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:16ii), but not dwelt on:

*Ahimsaa satyamasteyam brahmacharyam kshamaa dhritih;
Dayaarjavam mitaahaarah shaucham chaiva yamaa dasha.*

Non-violence, truth, non-stealing, continence (being absorbed in a pure state of consciousness), forgiveness, endurance, compassion, humility, moderate diet and cleanliness are the ten rules of conduct (yama).

The first yama is *ahimsa*, or non-violence, to remain passive in any situation, without the desire to harm anyone or anything, either physically, emotionally, psychologically or psychically. Ahimsa means not acting with the will to violate anything, even the atmosphere. Harmony and serenity have to be maintained. There is no need to place any religious connotation on the word ahimsa. It is a process of self-control, self-awareness and awareness of everything that surrounds one. If another person is harmed intentionally, control of one's mind and actions is lost and imbalance is created within, as violence means moving away from one's true nature. Ahimsa means coming closer to the pure spirit. Mahatma Gandhi was a living example of this doctrine.

Honesty is something we rarely find in this modern world of corruption and it is definitely something which needs to be cultivated and instilled again. Basically, *satyam*, honesty, means being truthful with oneself and not aiming to cheat others for personal gain or to discredit them.

Asteyam, non-stealing, is easy to understand – not taking that which belongs to another, not only for social or moral

reasons, but to avoid psychological and karmic repercussions. Stealing breeds guilt. In yoga one tries to release the complexes and samskaras from the mind and personality, so it is important not to create any more. If something is needed and it is truly essential, somehow it will come.

Brahmacharya, continence, is the next yama. Generally, brahmacharya is considered to be abstention from sexual involvement or relationships. Some people even go as far as having absolutely no contact with, neither talking to nor looking at the opposite sex. However, this is not the true meaning of brahmacharya. *Brahmacharya* is the combination of two words: *Brahman*, pure consciousness and *charya*, one who moves. Therefore, it means 'one who lives in constant awareness of Brahman' or 'one whose awareness is absorbed in pure consciousness, whose mind is above the duality of male and female, who sees the atman in all'. One who is in constant communion with the atma is a *brahmachari*. A true brahmachari can be involved in sexual relationships and maintain awareness of only the supreme experience. Passions do not arise in the mind when he or she comes in contact with the opposite sex.

In yoga and tantra they explain this as maintaining the bindu, meaning, not losing the *bindu* or semen. The bindu has to be kept in the brain centre where it is produced. It should not flow out through the sexual organs, and if it does, it should be drawn back. For this purpose there are many yogic techniques which curb the production of sex hormones. Yoga influences the whole endocrine system by regulating the pineal and pituitary glands.

Brahmacharya was generally taken to mean abstention from sexual activity, as by refraining from sexual stimulation, sexual impulses and the production of sex hormones are reduced. Sexual abstinence may be necessary in the beginning while one is trying to gain mastery over body and mind, but once this has been managed, and awareness of the higher reality can be maintained, sexual interaction is no barrier. In fact, in tantra it is never said that sexual

interactions are detrimental to spiritual awakening. On the contrary, tantra says that the sexual act can be used to induce spiritual awakening.

By avoiding sexual contact one does not automatically become a brahmachari. One may abstain from sexual interaction for thirty or forty years and still not be a brahmachari. If the mind is haunted by sexual fantasies or there is uncontrollable loss of semen even while avoiding any sort of contact, that person is definitely not a brahmachari. That is suppression, which causes frustration, and does more harm than good. Therefore, in hatha yoga there are special techniques which aid in brahmacharya by regulating hormonal secretions and the functioning of the glands. Sexual thoughts and desires are then curbed. After all, what causes sexual motivation? A chemical reaction in the brain and body via the hormones. Control of the hormones induces true brahmacharya. When the bindu is retained in the brain centre, sexual urges are controlled and the mind can remain absorbed in awareness of the supreme. This is real brahmacharya.

The next yama is forgiveness or *kshama*. Forgiveness actually means the ability to let experiences go from the mind and not to hold on to memories of past events. It means living in the present. This yama is not only for the sake of other people, it is more for one's own benefit. If one can forgive, life becomes more pleasant and harmonious. While revenge brings anger and remorse and creates karma, forgiveness brings happiness and lightness to the heart.

Yogi Swatmarama has already discussed *dritih*, endurance. He called it perseverance. The trials and tribulations of life are often arduous and painful, but they have a positive purpose. If one cannot endure ordinary mundane experiences, how will one cope when the atma reveals itself? A spiritual experience can occur at any moment and one has to be prepared to sustain it on every level. It is not just something which happens to the spirit and leaves the body and mind unaffected.

One has to be ever alert and constant in both practice and aspiration. Even if the whole world collapses, it does not matter. If hope and effort are given up, there can never be success. The divine power is gracious to devotees and disguises itself in many forms just to test their devotion and faith. When people give up hope and belief as the odds seem to have turned against them, the situation has been misunderstood. Due to concepts of good and bad an assumption has been made that a particular experience is negative, and there is a reaction to it. Nevertheless, whether circumstances seem to be pleasant or unpleasant, we must maintain faith and continue our practice. Only then can sadhana bear fruit.

Daya, compassion, is kindness to the young and old, rich and poor, worthy and seemingly unworthy. All people are of the one atma. Cruelty to others ultimately rebounds. Kindness to others brings divine mercy. If the heart is open to the divine energy and compassion is felt for every creature, one will make quick progress in the search for the atma.

Yogi Swatmarama has previously described *arjavam*, humility, as modesty. Spontaneous humility comes with divine awareness and surrender of the ego or 'I' awareness. It is ego which creates the feeling of separation from the atma and prevents us from feeling the inner being. Those, like Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh and many other great saints, who found unity in the atma, were as meek as small children. Humbleness or meekness means simplicity of character and lifestyle. The soul needs no lavish accessories, food or praises, and when one seeks them they pull one away from the true identity.

Mitahara, moderation in diet, means neither over-eating nor under-eating. It means eating sparingly but comfortably filling the stomach and meeting the requirements of the body. Thus, body and mind remain healthy and balanced. A weak body cannot support a strong mind. A strong and healthy body reflects the nature of the mind. Over-eating and greediness for food shows an uncontrolled mind. The

diet should be simple, pure and not over-spiced. Eat what is necessary to maintain bodily requirements and choose a diet which will be most conducive for sadhana. Do not, however, become too food conscious.

The last of the yamas is *shaucha*, cleanliness in one's lifestyle, keeping the body and mind in a pure state. When the body is clean and there are no blockages, it can become a perfect vessel for divine energy and pure consciousness. Not only should the internal body be clean, so should the surroundings in which one lives. To clean the body internally, hatha yoga prescribes the six cleansing techniques: neti, dhauti, nauli, basti, kapalbhati and trataka.

These ten yamas listed in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* are followed by the ten niyamas.

What are the niyamas of hatha yoga?

Swami Satyananda: The ten niyamas listed in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:16iii) are:

*Tapah santosha aastikyam daanameeshvarapoojanam;
Siddhaantavaakyashravanam hreematee cha; tapo hutam;
Niyamaa dasha samproktaa yogashaastravishaaradaih.*

Penance (austerity), contentment, belief (faith) in the Supreme, charity, worship of God, listening to the recitations of sacred scriptures, modesty, a discerning intellect, japa (mantra repetition) and sacrifice are the ten observances (niyamas).

The first is *tapah* which means 'to heat' and also refers to austerities. There are three types of tapas: *sharirik*, physical, *vachik*, vocal, and *manasik*, mental, each of which may again be sattvic, rajasic or tamasic.

In the olden days, tapas meant standing in cold water on one foot for hours at a time, or wearing a loin cloth in the freezing cold, and such like. These methods, however, are unnecessary for spiritual evolution and actually they do not help people of this age to come any closer to self-

realization. They will only cause physical discomfort and possibly diseases like rheumatism and arthritis and disbelief in the path of self-evolution. These austerities may help strengthen the mind but there are other less severe methods of doing this.

Austerities for people of this age involve doing those things which test the willpower and strength of mind and body. If one is used to getting up at seven a.m. and this habit is changed to getting up at four a.m., this is *tapas*. Once a person is accustomed to it, it no longer remains an austerity. Austerity is doing away with comforts and luxuries such as a ten inch thick foam mattress, expensive clothing, tasty food, television, air-conditioner and heater, and involves taking cold baths in winter and doing tasks which are not liked. Once a person has adjusted to such conditions, they no longer remain austerities. These processes mould the body and mind into a purer and more *sattwic* state, and help with spiritual growth.

Contentment or *santosha*, means developing the sense of satisfaction in any situation, whatever may come along. Whether one has a lot or nothing, whether there is gain or loss, one should try to feel that there is more than enough. The opposite of this is insecurity, which creates restlessness and unsteadiness. Most people find contentment in material fulfillment, but after a while discontent arises. When it is realized that desires can never be satisfied, it is time to search for fulfillment in spirit. This is the only way to truly feel *santosha* or satisfaction.

Belief in the Supreme or *astikyam*, is the same as faith. Some people call the Supreme, God. Of course, God is not a man sitting in heaven on a throne. Life and creation are very systematic and scientific. This cosmic power may be called God, Nature or Supreme consciousness, but definitely a higher force exists and controls all lower existences. Some people have been able to experience the existence and operation of the Supreme and it is the right of everyone to expand their consciousness to such a state. One can only maintain faith that one day, this experience will come.

Even an agnostic believes in something. Maybe he disagrees with religion, but he cannot say that he does not believe in a force greater than his own mind and body. He cannot deny the facts of science and nature and, although he will always try to deny the existence of God, he will still seek facts to prove His non-existence or to confirm his own existence. So, he is also searching for the higher experience. We are all like little children in the Supreme vision, and just as a baby trusts its mother, we should also have the same unquestioning faith in the higher force. A mother does not need to explain to her child why she is bathing or feeding it, as it will not understand her explanations. Similarly, the cosmic force has no need to explain anything to us. If one has faith in the will and the work of the Supreme, this faith alone is enough to bring guidance and protection.

Charity or *daanam*, not only means providing material things and financial aid for the poor and underprivileged, it also means helping or serving others in any way required, for example, by offering mental or emotional support. To be truly charitable, one must have a giving, unselfish and sharing attitude but not to the extent that one's own resources are exhausted.

Swami Sivananda calls this *udara vritti*, which means 'having a large heart'. In his words, "Charity must be spontaneous and unrestrained. Giving must become habitual. The joy in giving must be experienced. If one gives, the whole wealth of the world is yours. Money will come. This is the immutable, inexorable, unrelenting law of nature. Some people do charity and are anxious to see their name published in newspapers. This is the tamasic form of charity. One must give with the right mental attitude and realize God (the ultimate reality) through charitable deeds."

Worship of the Supreme Being or *Ishwara poojanam*, should not be misunderstood as pertaining to religion. Sage Patanjali calls it *Ishwara pranidhana*, or surrender to the Supreme Being. In India the majority of people do ritualistic pooja to their deity, but that is not the meaning implied here.

The external life everyone leads is but the manifestation of the Supreme. It is the interplay of energy and consciousness. That should be remembered constantly.

Everything is sacred, not just a pooja room. Worship or *pooja* should be internal. What is the point of spending hours doing ritualistic pooja, offering flowers, kumkum, rice and incense, and chanting mantras, if the awareness of the highest reality cannot be felt in one's external life? External pooja is done to awaken the inner consciousness, but if there are still arguments with the family and friends, cheating and causing pain and suffering, the pooja is meaningless. Pooja means carrying awareness and respect for the subtle force (the Supreme), in everything.

The sixth *niyama* is listening to discourses of spiritual scriptures or *siddhantavakya shravanam*. Traditionally, *siddhanta* is a specific section of the Vedas and vedantic philosophy: it is the culmination of spiritual knowledge collected in a concise form. Listening to spiritual knowledge, and to what ancient sages found in their quest and experience, helps develop our higher faculty of knowledge or *jnana*. It helps us understand the spiritual path and the way in which the spirit unfolds.

In India there is a tradition where people sit together with a person who has spiritual knowledge and discuss matters of the soul; it is called *satsang*. It is not necessary that only *siddhanta* be discussed, one can listen to any spiritual topic. Most people waste time and energy in going to the cinema and other such entertainment which only develops the worldly nature. *Satsang* preserves mental and emotional energy and it keeps one's awareness in the realm of spiritual vibrations and aspirations.

Modesty, or *hree*, is a part of humility, which has already been discussed.

A discerning intellect, or *mati*, is essential for discriminating between truth and untruth. It means being able to perceive the essential nature or underlying truth of a situation, whether the situation involves other people, or only oneself. It is something like being able to interpret

the significance of a dream – knowing whether it was due to physical imbalance, mental and emotional purging, suppression, or if it was of spiritual significance. Life is also symbolic of the internal world. Understanding its meaning and being able to analyze and judge correctly is to have a discerning intellect.

In some yogic texts the eighth observance is tapo, while in others it is japo. As tapaha has been mentioned, it seems more likely that the original word is japa. The *Hatharatnavali* and *Srimad Devi Bhagavatam* have also listed japa. *Japa* means ‘repetition of mantra.’ Mantra can be repeated mentally, whispered, sung or written. Not just any sound can be a mantra, nor are mantras the names of gods or holy words. Mantras are specifically formulated sound vibrations which affect the deeper layers of the mind and consciousness. There are different grades of mantras. Some affect the subtle body, some affect the pranic vibrations and others are purely transcendental.

Initially, japa is done consciously and mechanically, but after some time the mantra comes spontaneously from within one’s consciousness. One does not have to think about it, it just continues by itself. Awareness will be drawn to the sound and thought of the mantra like a moth to a light. The universal mantra which can be used by everybody is the mantra *Aum*. There is no greater mantra to repeat.

Sacrifice, or *hutam*, is the last niyama. It does not mean the ritualistic form of offering oblations in a fire ceremony. It means internal sacrifice, giving up worldly desires and surrendering the ego, sacrificing sensual experiences for spiritual experiences. Sacrifice is giving up the idea that life is for worldly pleasure alone.

All the yamas and niyamas given in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* constitute twenty mental disciplines and self-restraints which were originally designed to help a sadhaka conserve and build up his store of pranic and psychic energy. Although they were formulated by exponents of yoga, they can also be found in many religions. Those who had higher revelations

found these disciplines helpful for preparing aspirants for spiritual experiences. They should not, however, be considered as mere religious practices. They are a part of the yogic science.

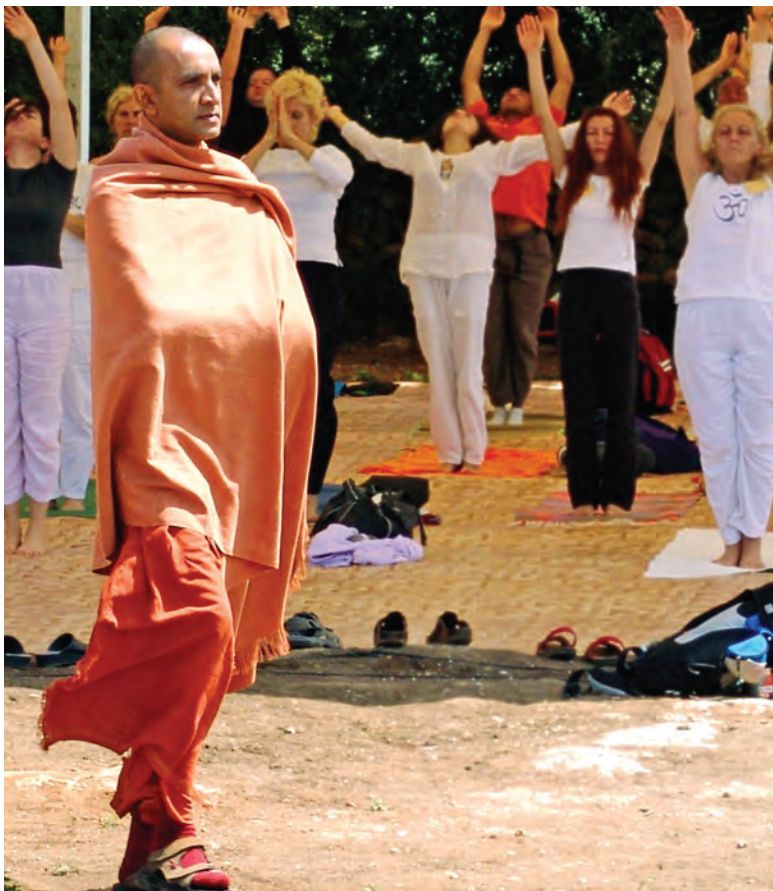
Which qualities do the Yoga Upanishads say the hatha yogi should cultivate?

Swami Niranjanananda: Several Upanishads have incorporated many of the raja yoga techniques into hatha yoga. One Upanishad describes some of the yamas and niyamas as being part of hatha yoga. The yama known as mitahara, meaning ‘balanced diet’ and the niyama, ahimsa, meaning ‘the absence of violence from within’, are mentioned.

In relation to mitahara, both ayurvedic and hatha yoga theory state that in order to maintain proper digestion and stimulate the digestive organs, food has to be consumed in certain quantities or proportions. The proportions prescribed are fifty percent solids, twenty-five percent liquids and leave twenty-five percent of the stomach empty. This is the rule that yogis are supposed to follow and this is what a yoga practitioner should aspire for. This rule leads to control over the mind. Greed has to be kept in check. Therefore, apart from the physical benefit, there is also the aspect of self-observation and mental control.

The niyama or discipline to be followed in hatha yoga is ahimsa. Ahimsa here does not mean non-injury – that is the dictionary definition. The yogic concept of ahimsa is removal of violence from within so that it is not experienced in thought, speech, action or behaviour. Just saying, “I follow ahimsa. I do not kill or injure,” has no meaning in yoga as long as negative and harmful thoughts continue to play in the mind. If a person is injuring themselves or someone else mentally through thoughts or behaviour, the shade of violence has not yet gone from that personality or life. It is only the external action of violence that has been stopped but that is not absence of violence from the personality.

Therefore, in the Yoga Upanishads, ahimsa has been defined as one of the niyamas to aspire for in hatha yoga, creating total harmony and coordination between mental functions, behaviour patterns and actions. Ahimsa can only be achieved with the help of awareness. As soon as one becomes aware of harmful thoughts being reflected in the behaviour or actions, as soon as it is realized that someone is being hurt emotionally, intellectually or physically, it has to be stopped then and there.



Appendices

Index of Questions

1. Understanding Hatha Yoga

DEFINITION AND MEANING

- Why is hatha yoga important for spiritual aspirants? 7
- What is the meaning of the word 'hatha'? 7
- Does hatha yoga mean physical yoga? 8
- What is the correct definition of hatha yoga? 9
- What is the traditional meaning of the term 'hatha yoga'? 10
- What practices are included in hatha yoga? 10

PURPOSE OF HATHA YOGA

- Why should one practise hatha yoga? 11
- What is the purpose of hatha yoga in spiritual life? 12
- Why is hatha yoga important? 12
- How can yoga, which is based in the body, help us to know the final truth? 13
- What is the true spirit of hatha yoga? 16
- What is the main objective of hatha yoga? 17
- What role does hatha yoga play in self-realization? 18
- How does hatha yoga help one achieve wellbeing? 19
- How does practising asana and pranayama refine and transform one's awareness? 19
- What are the different concepts of perfection? 20

EFFECTS AND BENEFITS

- What effect does hatha yoga have on the body and mind? 21

• Does physical weakness limit one's spiritual potential?	22
• How does hatha yoga benefit different types of people?	23
• How does hatha yoga benefit the body and mind?	23
• Why should hatha yoga be part of one's spiritual sadhana?	24
• What is hatha yoga's understanding of the human condition?	24
• How does hatha yoga strengthen the subtle inner capacity?	27
• How does hatha yoga improve physical and mental health?	29
• How does bahiranga, external yoga, influence the mind and inner dimension?	29
• Why is it important to purify the five elements or tattwas in the body?	30
• Why is it important to have physical and mental stamina for the spiritual path?	31
• Why is the effect of hatha yoga on the body's energy so important?	32
• Does hatha yoga transform the physical body at the subtle level?	33
• Do the hatha yoga practices transform the personality as well as the body?	34
• Do some people fear the changes that yoga may bring about in their life?	35

2. History of Hatha Yoga

ORIGINS

• Where did the knowledge of yoga come from?	36
• What are the origins of hatha yoga?	36
• How was hatha yoga originally disseminated?	37
• Which are the classical texts from the traditional literature of hatha yoga?	38
• Is it possible that yoga started with the evolution of Homo sapiens in Africa and spread with their migration?	39
• What evidence exists of the ancient yogic culture?	40
• What was the original purpose of asanas on the spiritual path?	41

EVOLUTION

• What is the relative importance of the written and oral traditions in the evolution of yoga?	41
--	----

• How did hatha yoga evolve as a system of physical practices?	45
• Was the system of hatha yoga a significant departure from the accepted approach to spiritual life?	46
• Why was a systematic approach to hatha yoga developed?	47
• Has yoga always been available to society or was there a time when it was for sannyasins only?	48
• Who established and maintained the yogic traditions?	50
• Where did the various branches of yoga evolve?	50
• What is known about the author of the hatha yoga text, <i>Gheranda Samhita</i> ?	51
• Is the yoga of today different to traditional yoga?	52
• How has the concept of yoga been adapted to changing times?	53
• How has the lineage to which Bihar School of Yoga belongs contributed to the evolution of hatha yoga?	54

3. Hatha Yoga in Other Traditions and Cultures

TANTRA

• What is the relationship between hatha yoga and tantra?	57
• Is the prana of hatha yoga the same as shakti in tantra?	59
• Why is the practice of hatha yoga relevant on the path of tantra?	59
• Is the practice of hatha yoga actually tantric?	60
• Why is hatha yoga necessary for the liberation of energy?	61
• Which tantric practices are included in hatha yoga?	63
• How do hatha yoga and tantra view the path to enlightenment?	65

ANCIENT EGYPT

• What knowledge did the ancient Egyptians have of the chakras?	68
• What is the significance of the caduceus?	69

ANCIENT GREECE

• What did the ancient Greeks know about the chakras?	69
---	----

BUDDHISM

• Which Buddhist tradition includes knowledge of prana?	70
• Where does kundalini reside according to Buddhism?	70

THE CHINESE TRADITION

- What are the links between the ancient Indian and Chinese traditions? 71
- Is prana the same as ki in the Chinese tradition? 72
- How does acupuncture work by manipulating the pranic flow? 73
- Do the nadis and chakras correspond with the meridians and stimulation points used in acupuncture? 73

CHRISTIANITY AND JUDAISM

- What is known about the theory that Jesus Christ came to India for spiritual training during the 'missing years'? 74
- What is the importance of yoga as a link between the Eastern and Western worlds? 75
- Did Christ have knowledge of yoga? 76
- Is an understanding of prana evident in the events and symbolism of Christianity? 76
- Does the Bible allude to the pranic body? 77
- Is chakra symbolism present in the Bible? 78
- Are there references to amrit in the Bible? 80
- How are the chakras depicted in European mysticism? 81
- Is yoga compatible with modern Christian institutions? 82

ISLAM AND SUFISM

- Does Islam have symbolism suggesting knowledge of the chakras? 82
- Are Sufi practices close to those of yoga? 83

PRE-COLUMBIAN SOUTH AMERICA AND SCANDINAVIA

- What evidence is there that yoga existed outside of India in ancient times? 83

4. The Pranamaya Kosha

THE PRANIC BODY

- What is the connection between hatha yoga and the pranic body? 86
- What is the pranic body? 86
- What is the nature of prana and does it need to be controlled? 87

• What are the pancha koshas?	87
• What is the role of prana in the five koshas?	90
• What does the pranic body consist of?	90
• How do one's activities and attitudes affect the pranic body?	95
• What do the lunar and solar energies represent?	96
• How do the practices of hatha yoga relate to the pranic body?	97
• How does hatha yoga affect the pranamaya kosha?	98
• What is the relationship of hatha yoga with ida and pingala nadis?	100
• How does imbalance between ida and pingala nadis cause diseases of body and mind?	100

HATHA YOGA AND PRANA

• Why is prana given so much prominence in hatha yoga?	101
• Can hatha yoga balance the disturbances of body and mind?	101
• How does purification of the physical and pranic body become the pathway to purification and expansion of mind?	102
• Why is hatha yoga described as a scientific process to aid spiritual upliftment?	103
• What effect does hatha yoga have on the pranic body?	104
• What does holistic yoga mean?	104
• How can hatha yoga practices help conserve and regenerate pranic levels?	105
• What evidence is there that hatha yoga practices increase the body's energy?	106
• What are energy blocks and can they be psychological?	107
• Where do energy blocks form in the body?	107
• Does hatha yoga remove blockages to the flow of prana in the nadis?	108
• Do asanas clear pranic blockages in preparation for pranayama?	108
• What happens in the physical and pranic bodies when energy blocks are released?	109
• Why is purification and strengthening of the physical and pranic system so important for spiritual awakening?	109
• What are some indications that hatha yoga is working?	110
• How do the practices of hatha yoga prepare the body to handle greater levels of consciousness?	111

- What is the experience when hatha yoga reverses the direction of flow of the different pranas? 112

AWAKENING SUSHUMNA NADI

- Where is sushumna situated within the physical body? 114
- What is sushumna nadi? 114
- How important is purifying the nadis in preparation for the ascent of kundalini in sushumna? 115
- How does hatha yoga's effect on the nervous system create the conditions necessary for awakening sushumna nadi? 115
- What is the most direct way of awakening sushumna? 117
- How does the practice of hatha yoga lead to the awakening of sushumna nadi? 118
- Why does hatha yoga emphasize a systematic process for awakening kundalini? 119
- How does one know when the union of ida, pingala and sushumna has taken place? 121
- How does the merging of ida, pingala and sushumna nadis unite the individual body with the cosmic body? 121

5. Hatha Yoga in Relation to Other Yogas

THE BRANCHES OF YOGA

- What are the different forms of yoga? 123
- What system of practices does the word 'yoga' actually refer to? 124
- Which branch of yoga does Satyananda Yoga most strongly advocate? 124

HATHA YOGA AS THE FOUNDATION

- Why is hatha yoga necessary for those who focus on another branch of yoga? 125
- What is the place of hatha yoga in the entire scheme of yoga? 125
- How do people living everyday lives know which yoga to practise? 126

BALANCE IN YOGA AND LIFE

- Are the various branches of yoga separate paths or do they interact? 129

- Do the various types of yoga provide practices for balancing specific aspects of life? 130

MANY PEOPLE, MANY PATHS

- How should one choose which path of yoga to follow? 131
- How should one choose a yoga that will help to alleviate one's particular problems? 132
- How do the gunas influence the type of yoga that should be practised? 132
- What is the best yoga to practise? 133

THE AIMS AND EFFECTS OF THE YOGAS

- What are the aims of kundalini, jnana and hatha yoga? 133
- What are the aims of the different yogas? 134
- How should the techniques in the various branches of yoga be applied to one's life? 134
- In what ways do the different yogas seek to control the mind? 136
- What are the therapeutic qualities of the different yogas? 136

MERGING PATHS

- How do the fruits of the main branches of yoga differ? 136
- How do the practices of the different yogas lead to the same ultimate goal? 137
- Do the different yogic paths have the same aim? 137

SADHANAS FOR EVOLUTION

- How do the different yogas awaken kundalini? 138
- How do the different yogas help aspirants to acquire siddhis? 138
- How do the different systems of yoga train the sadhaka? 139
- Is the diet recommended for hatha yoga applicable to the other yogas? 139
- What are the signs of transformation in hatha yoga? 140
- How do the different yogas evolve the aspirant? 140
- How does hatha yoga expand awareness of consciousness compared with other systems of yoga? 141
- How is the relationship between mind and prana experienced in the different yogas? 141

- Which yogas awaken prana? 142
- Is the ultimate aim of all the yogas to make the mind one-pointed or to awaken sushumna? 142

6. The Role of Hatha Yoga in Other Yogas

MANTRA AND BHAKTI YOGA

- How can the mind be managed? 143
- What role does hatha yoga have in bhakti yoga? 143

KARMA YOGA

- Why is karma yoga important for those who practise hatha yoga? 144
- Are the practices of hatha yoga and karma yoga mutually beneficial? 144

RAJA YOGA

- How does raja yoga compare with hatha yoga? 145
- Does the yogic tradition say that hatha yoga is a preparation for raja yoga? 145
- Why practise hatha yoga before raja yoga and tantra? 146
- How is hatha yoga a solution to the problem of maintaining mental equilibrium? 147
- How do the steps in hatha yoga compare with the steps in Sage Patanjali's raja yoga? 148
- Does raja yoga take one beyond the culmination of hatha yoga? 149
- What is the difference between the raja yoga and hatha yoga approaches to meditation? 150
- Does hatha yoga harmonize the pranic body while raja yoga harmonizes the psychic body? 151
- Has hatha yoga gained more prominence in the modern world than raja yoga? 151
- How does the hatha yogi develop a positive dharma without focusing on yama and niyama? 151
- What is the difference between the asanas of raja yoga and hatha yoga? 152
- Why don't the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali give instructions on asanas and pranayamas? 153

- Are the concepts of concentration and pranayama different in hatha yoga and in raja yoga? 154
- How is pranayama different in raja yoga and hatha yoga? 155
- Is the hatha yoga technique for khechari mudra different to the raja yoga method? 156

LAYA YOGA

- What is laya? 157
- Can laya yoga samadhi be attained through pranayama? 157
- Do hatha yoga and laya yoga both bypass the mind to reach samadhi? 158
- Why is hatha yoga such an important preparation for laya yoga? 159

KUNDALINI AND KRIYA YOGA

- Why is kundalini fundamental to hatha yoga? 161
- Why is a guru necessary to awaken kundalini? 162
- How important is hatha yoga as a preliminary practice to kundalini yoga? 164
- What is the role of hatha yoga in kundalini yoga and tantra? 165
- Do all the yogas lead to kundalini yoga? 166
- Is hatha yoga part of kundalini yoga? 166
- How is hatha yoga used to raise the kundalini? 167
- Does kriya yoga include hatha yoga? 167
- How does the combination of hatha yoga practices in kriya yoga make it a more powerful system? 168
- How are the five koshas affected by combining hatha yoga and raja yoga techniques in kriya yoga? 168
- Is the system of hatha yoga based on the theory of kundalini? 169

7. Sadhana

THE IMPORTANCE OF SADHANA

- What is the role of sadhana on the spiritual path? 171
- What is sadhana? 171
- Does the hatha yoga tradition give details about how to practise sadhana? 172

- Why do the classical hatha yoga texts offer different approaches to sadhana? 172
- What is the purpose of bahiranga yoga, external yoga sadhana? 173
- How can hatha yoga sadhana restore health and vitality to those who have not taken care of their bodies? 174
- How important is regular sadhana for progress in hatha yoga? 175
- How important is the guru in hatha yoga sadhana? 176
- Why do the scriptures say that the practices and sadhana must be kept secret? 178
- How long must one practise sadhana to perfect hatha yoga? 180
- Does sadhana always bring a result and if so, will it be obvious to the practitioner? 181
- What are the different ways of understanding and performing sadhana? 182

DAILY SADHANA

- How important is regularity of sadhana? 183
- How is it possible to spend the amount of time on sadhana that the hatha yoga texts recommend? 183
- How much time should a beginner spend on sadhana? 184
- How can one gain maximum benefit from a short daily routine of practices? 184

RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRECAUTIONS

- What is the way to perfection in yoga? 186
- How do the seasons influence hatha yoga sadhana? 186
- How important is an accurate method of practice in hatha yoga? 187
- What is the best approach to perfecting hatha yoga? 188
- What is the ideal time of day to practise asana and pranayama? 189
- Is there a recommended order for the practices done in daily sadhana? 190
- What is the sequence for the various practices performed during sadhana? 190
- What are the seven limbs of yoga described in *Gheranda Samhita*? 191

• How does one know what level of practice to do?	194
• How can one succeed in hatha yoga if the body is old or infirm?	194
• Why does hatha yoga have so many rules?	195
• How can the practices of hatha yoga be deepened?	196

8. Lifestyle for Sadhana

THE IDEAL PLACE

• What type of place is ideal for practising yoga?	198
• How important is it to have a supportive atmosphere for sadhana?	199
• According to the tradition, what is the ideal environment for sadhana?	200
• What type of climate is recommended for hatha yoga?	202
• How much emphasis is given to cleanliness as part of hatha yoga sadhana?	202
• Is living close to nature conducive to hatha yoga practice?	203
• Why can choosing the wrong place to practise be an obstacle to sadhana?	204

DIET FOR SADHANA

• What is a yogic diet?	206
• What attitude should one have to diet when practising sadhana?	206
• How is diet related to the mental states and the gunas?	207
• How important is dietary regulation for success in hatha yoga sadhana?	208
• Why is one's diet and attitude to food a part of sadhana?	209
• What specific foods are recommended for those undertaking sadhana?	210
• Which foods should be avoided in hatha yoga sadhana?	211
• Why is it best to eat only seasonal food?	212
• Is the temperature of food and its affect on the doshas considered by hatha yogis?	213
• How essential is a good diet in the practice of hatha yoga?	214
• Is fasting a part of purifying the body in hatha yoga?	215

9. The Sadhaka

QUALITIES FOR SUCCESS

- What does a student of hatha yoga need for success? 217
- How can resistance to doing sadhana be overcome? 218
- What personal qualities are needed for success in sadhana? 218
- What attitude should one cultivate towards sadhana? 220
- Is hatha yoga suitable for everyone? 221
- Are the qualities needed for success in hatha yoga developed by the sadhana which the classical tradition recommends? 223

OBSTACLES TO SADHANA

- Can one fail at sadhana? 226
- Why are siddhis considered obstacles to success in yoga? 227
- What are the obstacles to progress? 227
- Does hatha yoga mean giving up the pleasures of life? 229
- How can the willpower to maintain regular sadhana be developed? 230

YAMA AND NIYAMA

- Are yama and niyama given in hatha yoga? 231
- What are the yamas of hatha yoga? 232
- What are the niyamas of hatha yoga? 236
- Which qualities do the Yoga Upanishads say the hatha yogi should cultivate? 241

Index of Scriptural Quotes

BHAGAVAD GITA	258
GHERANDA SAMHITA OF SAGE GHERANDA	258
HATHA YOGA PRADIPIKA OF YOGI SWATMARAMA	260
HATHARATNAVALI OF SRINIVASA BHATTA MAHAYOGINDRA	265
HOLY BIBLE	268
SHIVA SAMHITA	268
SVETASVATARA UPANISHAD	270
TAITTIRIYA UPANISHAD	270
YOGA CHUDAMANI UPANISHAD	270
YOGA SUTRAS OF SAGE PATANJALI	270

BHAGAVAD GITA

4. The Pranamaya Kosha

(4:29) Apana is absorbed in prana (by some), and prana in apana by others. By restraining the courses of prana and apana, (the yogi is) wholly occupied in pranayama. 113

8. Lifestyle for Sadhana

(17:8) Foods which increase life, purity, strength, health, joy and cheerfulness, which are oleaginous and savoury, suitable and agreeable, are dear to the sattwic people. 207

(17:9) The foods that are bitter, sour, saline, excessively hot, dry, pungent and burning, are liked by the rajasic and are productive of pain, grief and disease. 207

(17:10) That which is stale, tasteless, putrid, rotten and impure refuse, is the food liked by the tamasic. 208

GHERANDA SAMHITA OF SAGE GHERANDA

1. Understanding Hatha Yoga

(1:2) O Yogeshwara, god of yoga! I wish to learn ghatastha yoga, which is a means to self-realization. O Yogeshwara! O Lord! Kindly tell me about this. 13

(1:4) There is no fetter like delusion and there is no force as powerful as yoga. There is no greater friend than knowledge and no foe worse than ego. 24

(1:8) If an unbaked mud pot is filled with water, it will break down and eventually disintegrate, but if the pot is hardened and then filled with water, it will neither dissolve nor be destroyed. The immature body of a human being needs to be understood in the same way. This body can only be matured in the fire of yoga. Therefore, yogic practices are essential to fully develop the body. 27

2. History of Hatha Yoga

(7:18) Lord Vishnu is in water, Vishnu is in the earth, Vishnu is on the mountain top and Vishnu is in the flames of fire. Thus this entire universe is indeed pervaded by Lord Vishnu. 51

4. The Pranamaya Kosha

When the nadis are full of impurities, vayu does not enter them.

87

6. The Role of Hatha Yoga in Other Yogas

(Opening prayer) I bow to the creator, who gave these spiritual instructions regarding knowledge of hatha yoga, which blooms in the form of raja yoga. Knowledge of hatha yoga serves as a ladder for those aspirants who wish to attain that stage.

146

7. Sadhana

(5:8–9) Yogic practices should not be commenced during winter, extreme cold, summer or the rainy season. If yogic practices are undertaken during these seasons, it leads to the spread of diseases. It is correct to start the practices during spring and autumn. When yogic practices are undertaken during these seasons, one attains success and becomes free from diseases.

186

(1:5) Just as by practising the letters of the alphabet in sequence, knowledge of all the scriptures is possible, similarly, by mastering yoga, self-realization is achieved.

188

8. Lifestyle for Sadhana

(5:3–7) Yogic practices should not be done in a far-off place, in a forest, in a capital city or in a crowd, otherwise there will be loss of siddhi, lack of success. Why? Far-off places are forbidden as no one can be believed in a distant country, a forest is an insecure place, and in a capital city there is excessive population. Therefore, all three places are prohibited for pranayama. It should be done in a beautiful spiritual region, where food is readily available, and the country is free from internal or external disturbances. Making a hut there, construct a boundary around it. There should be a well or a water source. The ground on which that hut is constructed should be neither too high nor too low, plastered with cow dung, free from insects and in a secluded place. Pranayama should be practised there.

204

9. The Sadhaka

(1:1) Once a disciple by the name of King Chandakapali was curious to learn yogic practices. He went to the hermitage of Sage Gheranda and, after prostrating before him with due humility and devotion, asked him a question. 221

(1:2) O Yogeshwara, god of yoga! I wish to learn ghatastha yoga, which is a means to self-realization. O Yogeshwara! O Lord! Kindly tell me about this. 221

(1:3) Sage Gheranda said, “O, Mahabaho! I appreciate your question. O dear child, I will explain to you the subject you are keen to learn about. Listen carefully to acquire this knowledge. 222

(1:9) Purification, firmness, steadiness, patience, lightness, inner perception and non-involvement are the seven sadhanas for the ghata. 223

(1:10–11) Through shatkarmas purification of the body is achieved, through asanas firmness, through mudras steadiness and through pratyahara patience is achieved. Through pranayama agility or lightness is achieved, through meditation self-realization and through samadhi non-involvement or detachment, and undoubtedly liberation, are achieved. 226

HATHA YOGA PRADIPIKA OF YOGI SWATMARAMA

1. Understanding Hatha Yoga

(4:79) There are practitioners of hatha yoga who do not have the knowledge of raja yoga. I consider them as mere practitioners because they derive no fruits for their efforts. 18

(3:8) Adinath said they [mudras and bandhas] are the bestowers of the eight divine powers. They are held in high esteem by all the siddhas and are difficult for even the gods to attain. 22

(1:10) For those continually tempered by the heat of tapa [the three types of pain – spiritual, environmental and physical] hatha is like the hermitage giving protection from the heat. For those always united in yoga, hatha is the basis, acting like a tortoise. 32

(2:17) Hiccups, asthma, coughs, headache, ear and eye pain, and various other diseases are due to disturbances of the vital air. 33

2. History of Hatha Yoga

(1:1) Salutations to the glorious primal (original) guru, Sri Adinath, who instructed the knowledge of hatha yoga which shines forth as a stairway for those who wish to ascend to the highest stage of yoga, raja yoga. 36

(1:4) Yogi Matsyendranath knew the knowledge of hatha yoga. He gave it to Gorakhnath and others, and by their grace the author (Swatmarama) learned it. 37

(1:3) The highest state of raja yoga is unknown due to misconceptions (darkness) created by varying ideas and concepts. In good will and as a blessing, Swatmarama offers light on hatha yoga. 48

3. Hatha Yoga in Other Traditions and Cultures

(4:64) Salutations to sushumna, kundalini, the nectar flowing from the moon, to the mindless state of mind (manonmani), to the great Shakti, to the atma. 59

(3:108) Kundalini is said to be coiled like a snake. Without a doubt, one who makes that shakti flow obtains liberation. 61

(3:103) By the yoga of vajroli practice, perfection of the body fructifies. This auspicious yoga even brings liberation alongside sensual involvement. 65

(3:123) What other methods are there to cleanse the 72,000 nadis of dirt besides the practice of arousing kundalini? 66

4. The Pranamaya Kosha

(2:15) Just as lions, elephants and tigers are gradually controlled, so the prana is controlled through practice. Otherwise the practitioner is destroyed. 87

(2:5) When all the nadis and chakras which are full of impurities are purified, then the yogi is able to retain prana. 99

- (2:4) The vital air does not pass in the middle channel because the nadis are full of impurities. So how can the state of unmani arise and how can perfection or siddhi come about? 110
- (2:19) When the nadis are purified there are external symptoms. Success is definite when the body becomes thin and glows. 111
- (2:20) When one is able to hold the vayu according to one's will, the digestive power increases. With the nadis purified, thus the inner sound or nada awakens and one is free from disease. 111
- (4:18) There are 72,000 nadis throughout the cage of this body. Sushumna is the Shambhavi, the remaining nadis are unimportant. 114
- (3:3) Then indeed sushumna becomes the pathway of prana, mind is free of all connections and death is averted. 115
- (3:124) This middle nadi, sushumna, easily becomes established, (straight) by the yogi's persistent practice of asana, pranayama, mudra and concentration. 118
- (3:118) In this way, it is easy for kundalini to issue from the opening of sushumna. Thus the prana proceeds through sushumna of its own accord. 119

6. The Role of Hatha Yoga in Other Yogas

- (2:76) There can be no perfection if hatha yoga is without raja yoga or raja yoga without hatha yoga. Therefore, through practice of both, perfection is attained. 145
- (1:2) Prostrating first to the guru, Yogi Swatmarama instructs the knowledge of hatha yoga only for (raja yoga) the highest state of yoga. 145
- (4:104) Tattwa is the seed, hatha is the soil, total desirelessness (vairagya) is the water. By these three the kalpa vriksha (wish-fulfilling tree) which is the unmani avastha (mindless state) immediately sprouts forth. 149
- (4:103) All the processes of hatha and laya yoga are but the means to attain raja yoga (samadhi). One who attains raja yoga is victorious over time (death). 149

- (1:67) Asanas, various types of khumbaka, and the other various means of illumination should all be practised in the hatha yoga system until success in raja yoga is attained. 153
- (4:29) Mind is the ruler of the senses, prana is the ruler of the mind. Dissolution is the lord of the prana and that dissolution (laya) is the basis of nada. 158
- (4:30) This is verily called liberation or moksha...when prana and mind are in laya, indescribable ecstasy is created. 159
- (4:31) When inhalation and exhalation are stopped (finished), enjoyment of the senses annihilated, when there is no effort, and a changeless state (of mind) occurs, the yogi attains laya or absorption. 160
- (3:1) As the serpent (Sheshnaga) upholds the earth and its mountains and woods, so kundalini is the support of all the yoga practices. 161
- (3:2) Indeed, by guru's grace this sleeping kundalini is awakened, then all the lotuses (chakras) and knots (granthis) are opened. 162
- (3:107) The kundalini shakti sleeps above the kanda. This shakti is the means of liberation to the yogi and bondage for the ignorant. One who knows this is the knower of yoga. 166
- (3:105) Just as a door is opened with a key, similarly the yogi opens the door to liberation with kundalini. 170

7. Sadhana

- (1:11) Hatha yoga is the greatest secret of the yogis who wish to attain perfection (siddhi). Indeed, to be fruitful, it must be kept secret; revealed it becomes powerless. 172
- (1:65) Perfection results from practical application. Without practising how can it happen? Just by reading the shastras perfection in yoga will never be attained. 175
- (1:66) Neither by wearing the garb of a siddha, nor by talking about it (is perfection attained). Only through practical application does one become a siddha. This is the truth without a doubt. 175
- (3:78) There is a wonderful means by which the nectar is averted from falling into the sun. This is obtained by the

guru's instructions and not from the hundreds of shastras (treatises).	176
(3:79) With the navel region above and the palate below, the sun is above and the moon below. It is called vipareet karani. When given by the guru's instructions it is fruitful.	176
(3:9) These must remain a secret just like precious stones, and not be talked about to anyone, just as one does not tell others about his intimate relations with his wife.	179
(1:40) The yogi who meditates on the self or atma, takes moderate and pure food and practises siddhasana for twelve years, attains perfection or siddhi.	180
(2:16) By proper practice of pranayama etc., all diseases are eradicated. Through improper practice all diseases can arise.	187
(1:17) Prior to everything, asana is spoken of as the first part of hatha yoga. Having done asana one gets steadiness (firmness) of body and mind; freedom from disease and lightness (flexibility) of the limbs.	190
(1:55) Thus the best of yogis, being free from fatigue in practising asana and bandha, should practise purification of the nadis, mudras and pranayama.	191
(1:56) Asana, the varieties of kumbhaka, practices called mudras and concentration on the inner sound (nada) comprise the sequence of hatha yoga.	191
(1:64) Whether young or old, very old, sick or feeble, one can attain perfection in all the yogas by practising.	195

8. Lifestyle for Sadhana

(1:12) The hatha yogi should live alone in a hermitage and practise in a place the length of a bow (one and a half metres) where there is no hazard from rocks, fire or water; and which is in a well-administered and virtuous kingdom (nation or town) where good alms can be easily attained.	199
(1:13) This is the description of the yoga hermitage as prescribed by the siddhas for the hatha yoga practitioners. The room of sadhana should have a small door, without aperture (window), holes or cracks, being neither too high nor too low. It should be spotlessly clean, wiped with cow	

manure and free from animals or insects. Outside there should be an open platform with a thatched roof, a well and a surrounding wall. The appearance of the hermitage should be pleasant. 200

(1:63) The yogi should take nourishing and sweet food mixed with ghee and milk; it should nourish the dhatus and be pleasing and suitable. 208

(1:58) Mitahara is defined as agreeable and sweet food, leaving one fourth of the stomach free, and eaten as an offering to please Shiva. 209

(1:62) Good grains, wheat, rice, barley, milk, ghee, brown sugar, sugar candy (crystallized sugar), honey, dry ginger, patola fruit (species of cucumber), five vegetables, mung and such pulses, and pure water. 210

(1:59) The foods which are prohibited (for the yogi) are: those which are bitter, sour, pungent, salty, heating, green vegetables (other than those ordained), sour gruel, oil, sesame and mustard, alcohol, fish, flesh foods, curds, buttermilk, horse gram, fruit of jujube, oil cakes, asafoetida and garlic. 211

(1:60) Unhealthy diet should not be taken, that which is reheated after becoming cold, which is dry (devoid of natural oil), which is excessively salty or acidic, stale or has too many (mixed) vegetables. 212

9. The Sadhaka

(1:16i) Enthusiasm, perseverance, discrimination, unshakeable faith, courage and avoiding the company of common people, are the six causes which bring success in yoga. 218

(1:15) Overeating, exertion, talkativeness, adhering to rules, being in the company of common people and unsteadiness (wavering mind) are the six (causes) which destroy yoga. 228

(1:16ii) Non-violence, truth, non-stealing, continence (being absorbed in a pure state of consciousness), forgiveness, endurance, compassion, humility, moderate diet and cleanliness are the ten rules of conduct (yama). 232

(1:16iii) Penance (austerity), contentment, belief (faith) in the Supreme (God), charity, worship of God, listening to the recitations of sacred scriptures, modesty, a discerning intellect, japa (mantra repetition) and sacrifice are the ten observances (niyamas). 236

HATHARATNAVALI OF SRINIVASA BHATTA MAHAYOGINDRA

1. Understanding Hatha Yoga

(1:21) The letter 'ha' stands for surya (sun) and the letter 'tha' denotes chandra (moon). When chandra and surya are brought into a balanced condition, that is called hatha yoga. 8

(1:16) Asanas, various kumbhakas and efficacious mudras all these practices of hatha result in raja yoga. 12

(1:4) Hatha yoga is being expounded only to achieve raja yoga, for those who are ignorant of the great path of raja yoga and are perplexed by the confusions caused by the multiplicity of views. 12

(1:86) By churning the ocean one can get valuable gems; in the same way by churning the ocean of different traditions [of yoga] a valuable garland of gems having golden work on it is produced. A yogi [who has got this type of garland] will never neglect such a thing. 21

(1:22) He who untiringly practises yoga in all its aspects attains success even if he is young, old, diseased or weak. 23

2. History of Hatha Yoga

(1:1) Bowing towards Sri Adinatha, the great scholar Srinivasa starts writing Hatharatnavali which is like an ornament for the yogis to be worn around the neck. 37

3. Hatha Yoga in Other Cultures and Traditions

(2:139) Imbibing the surging streams of nectar one lives long in a body soft like a lotus fibre and is free from all diseases. If the tip of the tongue constantly touches (the roof of the nasopharyngeal cavity) and takes on it the constant flow of the stream of the juice which tastes saltish, pungent, chilly, like milk, honey or like ghee. 63

4. The Pranamaya Kosha

(2:143) Pingala, Dumbhini, Surya, Yamuna, Aksara, Kalagni, Rudri and Chandi are all names for pingala. 93

(2:144) Ida, Chandra, Sasi, Vali Ganga, Vama all are synonymous words for ida. 93

5. Hatha Yoga in Relation to Other Yogas

(1:18) Neither can hatha yoga be perfected without raja yoga nor raja yoga without hatha. Hatha yoga and raja yoga are dependent on each other. 126

7. Sadhana

(2:67) There is a divine practice which binds the mouth of the sun in the navel. It can only be known from the instructions of a guru, not from millions of discussions. 177

(1:70) The sadhaka who has awakened sleep, has controlled the diet, has won the breath and sense organs and who daily practises hatha yoga becomes equal to Brahma. 186

(1:77) Yoga becomes futile by overeating, over-exertion, talking too much, severe austerity, public contact and fickleness of mind. 195

8. Lifestyle for Sadhana

(1:73) Wicked company, basking near fire, company of women, long walking, bathing early in the morning, fasting and doing anything which causes much discomfort to the body are to be avoided. 202

(1:69) Residing in this type of cottage and free from all worries, one should be occupied with yoga and yoga alone, always in the way advised by the guru. 203

(1:23) In the beginning of the practice of yoga food with milk, etc. is advised. But when the practice has stabilized there is no need to observe such a restriction. 206

9. The Sadhaka

(1:78) Yoga is successfully attained by following these things – effort, steadiness, perseverance, correct understanding of philosophy, stability of semen, controlled diet, abandoning

public contact, giving up sleep, control over breathing, keeping oneself firm in tradition, abandoning laziness and by the favour (kindness) of guru and acharya. 218

HOLY BIBLE

3. Hatha Yoga in Other Cultures and Traditions

1 Corinthians (10:17) Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. 77

Genesis (28:12) And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! 78

Revelation (1:20) The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand and the seven golden candlesticks – the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks which you saw are the seven churches. 79

John (4:14) But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life. 80

SHIVA SAMHITA

6. The Role of Hatha Yoga in Other Yogas

(5:181) The hatha yoga cannot be obtained without the raja yoga, nor can the raja yoga be attained without the hatha yoga. Therefore, let the yogi first learn the hatha yoga from the instructions of the wise guru. 146

6. Sadhana

(3:16) The person who has control over himself attains verily success through faith; none other can succeed. Therefore, with faith, the yoga should be practised with care and perseverance. 171

(3:10) Now I shall tell you how easily to attain success in yoga, by knowing which the yogis never fail in the practice of yoga. 177

(3:11) Only the knowledge imparted by a guru, through his lips, is powerful and useful; otherwise it becomes fruitless, weak and very painful. 177

(3:12) He who is devoted to knowledge, while pleasing the guru with every attention, readily obtains the fruit of that knowledge. 177

(3:13) There is not the least doubt that guru is father, guru is mother and guru is even God; and as such, he should be served by all with their thought, word and deed. 178

(3:14) By guru's favour everything good relating to one's self is obtained. So the guru ought to be daily served; else there can be nothing auspicious. 178

(3:34) Now I will tell you the means by which success in yoga is quickly obtained; it must be kept secret by the practitioner so that success may come with certainty. 178

(5:207) The yogi, desirous of success, should keep the hatha yoga as a great secret. It becomes fruitful while kept secret, revealed it loses its power. 179

(4:9) Therefore, those who wish for emancipation should practise this daily. Through practice (abhyasa), success is obtained; through practice one gains liberation. 183

(4:10) Perfect consciousness is gained through practice. Yoga is attained through practice; success in mudras comes by practice; through practice success is gained in pranayama. Death can be cheated of its prey through practice, and man becomes the conqueror of death by practice. 183

(5:210) Therefore, the yogis should perform yoga according to the rules of practice. He who is contented with what he gets, who restrains his senses, being a householder who is not absorbed in the household duties, certainly attains emancipation by the practice of yoga. 195

8. Lifestyle for Sadhana

(3:20) Let the yogi go to a beautiful and pleasant place of retirement or a cell, assume the posture padmasana, and sitting on a seat made of kusa grass, begin to practise the regulation of the breath. 198

SVETASVATARA UPANISHAD

6. The Role of Hatha Yoga in Other Yogas

(2:12) When the fivefold elements of yoga come to the notice of a yogi, while concentrating the mind on earth, water, light, air and ether, then his gross body becomes the body made of the fire of yoga and he is not affected by disease, old age or death. 166

TAITTIRIYA UPANISHAD

4. The Pranamaya Kosha

(Brahmanandavalli 2:2) Verily, besides this physical body, which is made of the essence of the food, there is another, inner self comprised of vital energy by which this physical self is filled. Just as the fleshly body is in the form a person, accordingly this vital self is in the shape of a person. 88

YOGA CHUDAMANI UPANISHAD

4. The Pranamaya Kosha

(v.27) Just as a ball goes up and down when thrown by the hand, similarly, the individual soul is thrown up (and down) in the same way by the movement of prana and apana (and therefore) does not remain still. 113

YOGA SUTRAS OF SAGE PATANJALI

9. The Sadhaka

(2:46) Steady and comfortable should be the posture. 224

Glossary

Abhimana – pride; egoism.

Acharya – spiritual preceptor, master.

Adhibhautika – suffering which proceeds from extrinsic causes, such as other people, beasts, birds or inanimate objects; in Samkhya philosophy, one of the three miseries caused by avidya (ignorance).

Adhidaivika – extrinsic suffering due to supernatural causes; environmental hardship and pain; in Samkhya philosophy one of the three miseries caused by avidya (ignorance).

Adhyatmika – pertaining to the atma (soul); that which proceeds from intrinsic causes, such as disorders of the body and mind; which is coming out of one's own being due to either unconscious psychological frustration or emotional tension; in Samkhya philosophy, spiritual hardship and pain, one of the three miseries caused by avidya (ignorance).

Adi – first, primary, original.

Adinath – literally means the 'first lord'; primordial guru of all; cosmic consciousness; name of Lord Shiva given by the Nath sect of yogis; first guru of the Nath yogis.

Agnisar kriya – a breathing technique which strengthens the diaphragm and lower stomach region and awakens the digestive fire.

Ahamkara – faculty of ego, awareness of the existence of 'I'.

Ahimsa – non-violence in thought, word and deed.

Ajapa japa – continuous, spontaneous repetition of mantra; meditation practice in which mantra is coordinated with breath.

Ajna chakra – psychic/pranic centre situated at the medulla oblongata at the top of the spinal column in the mid-brain; seat of intuition, higher knowledge; third eye.

Amaroli – drinking of one's own urine in order to detoxify the body and develop immunity, stamina and vitality.

Amrita – the nectar of immortality which descends from bindu.

Anahata chakra – psychic/pranic centre situated in the spine behind the sternum; associated physically with the cardiac plexus, heart and lungs, mentally with emotion, especially love, and spiritually with *atma*, the spirit.

Anandamaya kosha – sheath or body of bliss; the innermost wrapper or sheath of the embodied spirit.

Annamaya kosha – sheath or body of matter; the sphere of existence created by food, maintained by food and which ultimately becomes food, i.e. the body.

Antahkarana – literally means 'inner tool', inner organ of consciousness, consisting of: ahamkara, manas, buddhi and chitta.

Antaranga yoga – internal stage of sadhana; includes pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi.

Apana vayu – one of the pancha pranas or vayus, it is located between the navel and the perineum. It flows downward and controls elimination and reproduction.

Arjavam – humility; innocence; straightforwardness.

Asana – a yoga posture; used in hatha yoga to channel prana, open the chakras and remove energy blocks; in raja yoga, a physical posture in which one is at ease and in harmony with oneself.

Ashtanga yoga – the eight limbs of yoga described by Sage Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras*: yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi.

Ashwini mudra – horse gesture; a yogic practice to redirect energy upwards; mudra involving contraction of the anal sphincter.

Asteya – non-stealing, honesty.

Astikam – belief in God (with or without form).

Atma, atman – the self beyond mind and body; principle of life, highest reality, Supreme Consciousness, spirit, soul.

Atmapuri – city of the soul i.e. the living physical body.

Atma shakti – the power of the atma; spiritual energy.

Avidya – ignorance of reality.

Bahiranga yoga – external stage of sadhana; includes yama, niyama, asana and pranayama.

Bandha – psycho-muscular energy locks which close the pranic exits (like throat, anus etc); psychic locks that concentrate the flow of energy in the body at one point or plexus.

Basti – one of the shatkarmas; yogic enema.

Bhagavad Gita – literally, ‘divine song’; Lord Krishna’s discourse to his disciple Arjuna delivered on the battlefield of Kurukshetra at the commencement of the great Mahabharata war; one of the source books of Hindu philosophy, containing the essence of the Upanishads and yoga.

Bhakti – intense inner devotion in which the intellect, emotions and self are channelled towards a divine relationship.

Bhakti yoga – branch of yoga in which emotional energy is channelled towards a divine relationship; a systematic path with nine stages which expand, strengthen, and purify the emotions.

Bhastrika pranayama – bellows breathing; pranayama in which the breath is forcibly drawn in and out through the nose in equal proportions, like the pumping action of the bellows.

Bhoga – sensual enjoyment; external experience.

Bhoota – element; the five major elements (mahabhootas or tattwas) are earth, water, fire, air and space.

Bhrumadhya – trigger point for ajna chakra located at the eyebrow centre.

Bhujangasana – the cobra pose, a backward bending asana.

Bhukti – material enjoyment.

Bija – seed; seed state; source, origin.

Bija mantra – seed sound; a basic mantra or syllable.

Bindu – seed, source, drop; point of potential energy and consciousness, used in kriya yoga; the basis from which emanated the first principle according to the tantra shastra; nucleus; psychic centre located in the brain; in tantra and hatha yoga it also represents a drop of semen.

Brahmachari – one who practices brahmacharya; one who moves in consciousness of the true reality, Brahman; a person in the first quarter of life; one who preserves the energy of the semen or female equivalent; a celibate.

Brahmacharya – one who is absorbed in higher consciousness; sensual restraint; celibacy; conduct suitable for proceeding to the highest state of existence; one of the yamas described by Sage Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras* as resulting in indomitable courage.

Brahman – etymologically ‘ever expanding, limitless consciousness’; name of Supreme Consciousness or cosmic intelligence according to Vedanta philosophy; God as creator; monistic concept of absolute reality.

Brahmana – integral part of the Vedas which elucidates the path of ritual to be followed by householders and explains the meaning and use of vedic hymns.

Brahmarandhra – crown of the head; the fontanelle; opening in the crown of the head through which the soul is said to escape on leaving the body.

Brahmari pranayama – a breathing technique in which a sound like a honey bee is made and the attention is focused at ajna or bindu.

Buddha – the enlightened one; generally referring to the founder of Buddhism.

Buddhi – discerning, discriminating aspect of mind; aspect of mind closest to pure consciousness; one of the four parts of the antahkarana, or inner instrument.

Buddhism – a religion and philosophy based on the teachings of the Buddha.

Chakra – circle, wheel or vortex; pranic/psychic centre; confluence point of energy flows (nadis) in the body; the seven major chakras for descent of divine energy or for human evolution are sahasrara, ajna, vishuddhi, anahata, manipura, swadhisthana and mooladhara.

Chandra bheda pranayama – pranayama to activate ida nadi.

Chitta – individual consciousness, including the subconscious and unconscious layers of mind; thinking, concentration, attention, enquiry; storehouse of memory or samskaras; one of the four parts of the antahkarana, or inner instrument.

Chitta shakti – the power of pure consciousness; mental force governing the subtle dimensions.

Danam – unconditional giving; charity.

Darshan – a glimpse; vision; direct perception; philosophy.

Dattatreya – an ancient sage who learned from twenty-four gurus; considered to be an incarnation of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva; author of *Dattatreya Samhita*.

Daya – compassion, kindness to all.

Deva – being of light; divine being.

Dhairyam – the fourth limb of Sage Gheranda's saptanga yoga; constancy; steadiness; calmness; patience.

Dhanurasana – the bow pose, a backward bending asana.

Dharana – practice of concentration or complete attention; sixth stage of ashtanga yoga described by Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* as holding or binding the mind to one point.

Dhatu – element of the physical body, altogether there are seven dhatus; also means semen.

Dhauti – one of the shatkarmas; cleansing techniques for the digestive system, chest and head.

Dhyana – spontaneous state of meditation; one-pointedness of mind through concentration on either a form, thought

or sound; absorption in the object of meditation; seventh stage of Sage Patanjali's ashtanga yoga.

Dridhata – the second limb of Sage Gheranda's saptanga yoga; fixed, firm, strong, certain, unshaken.

Dritih – perseverance, endurance.

Ekachitta – one-pointed mind.

Gayatri mantra – a most sacred twenty-four syllable mantra which enables learning.

Ghata – mud pot; vessel.

Ghatastha yoga – the yoga of Sage Gheranda, in which he describes the body as a mud pot which needs to be fired by the practice of yoga in order to strengthen and purify it so that one may practise sadhana and attain knowledge of reality.

Gheranda Samhita – traditional text on hatha yoga by Sage Gheranda. It explains seven limbs (saptanga) of yoga: shatkarma, asana, mudra, pratyahara, pranayama, dhyana and samadhi.

Gorakhsha Samhita – ancient hatha yoga text, ascribed to Yogi Gorakhnath, founder of the Nath sect.

Guna – quality; the three gunas, qualities or aspects of prakriti are sattwa, rajas and tamas.

Guru – one who dispels the darkness caused by ignorance (avidya); teacher of the science of ultimate reality who by the light of his own atma can dispel darkness, ignorance and illusion from the mind and enlighten the consciousness of a devotee/disciple; preceptor.

Halasana – the plough pose; an inverted posture.

Ham – bija mantra of the space element and vishuddhi chakra.

Hatha yoga – a system of yoga specifically using practices for bodily purification; yoga of attaining physical and mental purity and balancing the prana (energy) in ida and pingala nadis so that sushumna nadi opens, enabling samadhi experiences.

Hatha Yoga Pradipika – text on hatha yoga compiled by Yogi Swatmarama, usually translated as 'Light on Hatha Yoga'.

Hatharatnavali – a late medieval treatise on hatha yoga and tantra by Srinivasa Bhatta Mahayogindra.

Hiranyagarbha – cosmic mind or subtle body; Brahman; golden seed of the unity of life; it is said that Brahman alone is creating himself from his own substance.

Homa – sacrificial fire which symbolizes the divine light on earth; ritualistic process in which oblations are offered into the fire.

Hree – modesty, humility.

Hutum – sacrifice; inner sacrifice.

Ida – a major pranic channel running from the left side of mooladhara chakra to the left side of ajna chakra, governing the left side of the body and the right side of the brain. The ida energy flow criss-crosses the spine through the major chakras between mooladhara and ajna, conducting the passive aspect of prana manifesting as the mental force, lunar force or chitta shakti. Also called chandra nadi as the lunar energy flows through it.

Indriya – sense organ; power of the senses.

Ishta devata – personal deity, one's favourite symbol of the Supreme.

Ishwara – higher reality; God; non-changing, indestructible principle or quality.

Jaina – Indian religion noted for strict adherence to non-violence.

Jalandhara bandha – throat lock; practice in which the chin rests forward upon the upper sternum.

Japa – a meditation practice involving repetition of a mantra.

Jivanmukta – liberated in life; an enlightened person, a person purified by true knowledge of the Supreme Reality and freed from future births while still embodied.

Jnana, jnanam – knowledge, cognition, wisdom; higher knowledge derived from meditation or from inner experience.

Jnana yoga – yoga of knowledge and wisdom attained through spontaneous self-analysis and investigation of

abstract and speculative ideas; leading a discriminative lifestyle, living with wisdom.

Jnanendriya – organ of sense perceptions and knowledge; five in number, viz. ears, eyes, nose, tongue and skin.

Kaivalya – final liberation; highest state of samadhi; that state of consciousness which is beyond duality.

Kali – primal manifestation of Shakti; wife of Shiva; deity, divine mother; destroyer of time, space and object, i.e. ignorance.

Kali yuga – the present age, last of the four ages or cycles in the Day of Brahma and maha yuga, which began in 3,102 BC and has a duration of 432,000 years. During this cycle man is collectively at the height of technology, decadence, dishonesty and corruption of spiritual awareness; dark, evil, difficult and full of strife.

Kalpa vriksha – wish-fulfilling tree; a psychic centre closely linked with anahata chakra.

Kama – emotional, sensual love; lust.

Kanda – the source of the nadis in the human body, it is situated from mooladhara to manipura.

Kapalbhati – frontal brain cleansing breath; one of the six major cleansing techniques, shatkarmas of hatha yoga; process of purifying the frontal region of the brain by breathing rapidly through the nostrils with emphasis on exhalation.

Karma – action and result; law of cause and effect.

Karma yoga – yogic path of action; union with the Supreme Consciousness through action; action without attachment to the fruits of action.

Karmendriya – motor organ; there are five physical organs of action, viz. vocal cords, hands, feet, genital organ and anus.

Kashmir Shaivism – a school of tantra based on the Trika-shastra, a division of Shaivism found in North India.

Kati chakrasana – waist rotating pose; a dynamic spinal twist.

Kevala – spontaneous; alone.

Khechari mudra – literally ‘the attitude of moving in space’; tongue lock; a hatha yoga practice in which the elongated tongue passes back into the pharynx to stimulate the flow of life-giving nectar (amrita), whereas in the milder raja yoga form the tongue is inserted in, or folded backwards towards, the upper cavity of the palate.

Kosha – sheath or body; a dimension of experience and existence.

Kripa – blessing, grace, mercy.

Krishna – literally ‘black’ or ‘dark’; eighth incarnation of Vishnu; avatara who descended in the dwapara yuga. He is perhaps the most celebrated hero in Hindu mythology and seems to be a historical figure. To uphold dharma he orchestrated the Mahabharata war. His teachings to his friend and disciple Arjuna during that war are immortalized in the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Kriya yoga – practices of kundalini yoga designed to speed the evolution of humanity.

Krodha – anger, aggression.

Kshama – forgiveness; patience.

Kumbhaka – internal or external retention of the breath.

Kundalini – the evolutionary energy in a human being; spiritual energy; Devi described as the potential energy of a human being dormant in mooladhara chakra, which, when awakened, awakens the chakras, resulting in progressive enlightenment.

Laghavatvam – the fifth limb of Sage Gheranda’s saptanga yoga; lightness of body.

Lalana chakra – a minor chakra at the back of the throat above the palate.

Laya yoga – literally, union by absorption; yoga of conscious dissolution of individuality.

Lobha – greed; desire.

Mada – arrogance.

Maha prana – prana in its cosmic unmanifest aspect.

Maha shakti – the great energy; kundalini.

Manana – reflection, the second of the three steps on the path of knowledge in vedantic sadhana.

Manas – finite mind, rational mind; the mind concerned with senses, thought and counter-thought; perception, intelligence.

Manas shakti – mental energy.

Manas tattwa – element representing the mind.

Manasik – mental.

Mandala – circular symbolic pictorial depiction of cosmic power and/or the human psyche.

Manipura chakra – literally means ‘city of jewels’; psychic/pranic centre situated in the spine behind the navel; associated with the solar plexus and digestive organs and mentally with willpower; source of vitality and energy.

Manomaya kosha – mental sheath or body; mental sphere of life and awareness.

Mantra – words of power; sound vibrations which liberate the mind when repeated.

Mati – mind; discerning intellect.

Matsyendranath, Yogi – one of the founders of hatha yoga; guru of Yogi Gorakhnath.

Mitahara – sattwic food; fresh and digestible food eaten moderately and appreciatively.

Moha – delusion; infatuation.

Moksha – liberation from the cycles of birth and death and the illusion of maya.

Moola bandha – perineum contraction; contraction of the perineal body in the male and the cervix in the female body; technique used for locating and awakening mooladhara chakra.

Mooladhara chakra – the lowest psychic/pranic centre in the human body; situated in the perineal floor in men and the cervix in women; associated physically with the coccygeal plexus, excretory and reproductive organs, and mentally with the instinctive nature; spiritually it is the seat of kundalini.

Mudra – literally, ‘gesture’; psychic, emotional, devotional, and aesthetic gestures; attitudes of energy intended to link individual pranic force with universal or cosmic force.

Mukti – release, liberation, final absolution of the consciousness from the chain of birth and death and from the illusion of maya.

Mumukshu – a spiritual aspirant seeking liberation.

Nadi – flow; a river or channel of energy; psychic current; subtle channel in the pranic body, conducting the flow of shakti; comparable to the meridians of acupuncture.

Nadi shodhana pranayama – nadi purification; a pranayama designed to purify and balance the two main energy flows of the body, ida and pingala nadis.

Narada Bhakti Sutras – one of the main bhakti yoga texts, authored by Sage Narada, a celebrated devarishi.

Narayana – epithet of Vishnu, the supporter of life.

Nasikagra drishti – nosetip gazing; a practice to stimulate mooladhara chakra.

Nath – name of an important sect of hatha yogis; literally lord or master.

Nauli – abdominal massaging; one of the shatkarmas in which the rectus abdominii muscles are contracted and isolated vertically.

Neti – one of the shatkarmas; nasal cleansing with saline water (jala neti), a waxed string (sutra neti) or other elements.

Nididhyasana – profound, deep meditation, the third of the three steps on the path of knowledge in vedantic sadhana.

Nirliptam – the seventh limb of Sage Gheranda’s saptanga yoga; the state of being unattached.

Nivritti marga – the path of introversion, return to the source; path free from modifications of consciousness (vrittis).

Niyama – observance of rules or rules of personal discipline to render the mind tranquil in preparation for meditation; the second step of the eight limbs (ashtanga yoga) of Sage Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras*.

Padmasana – lotus pose; classical meditative posture.

Pancha – five.

Parivrajaka – wandering mendicant; ascetic; stage of life lasting for 12 years in the traditional training of a sannyasin.

Parvati – goddess and consort of Shiva, mother of Ganesha and Kartikeya.

Paschimottanasana – back stretching pose; a forward bending posture.

Pawanmuktasana – a group of asanas that remove any blockages preventing free flow of energy in the body and mind; three groups of asanas: the anti-rheumatic group, the digestive/abdominal group, and the energy block releasing group (shakti bandhas).

Pingala nadi – a major pranic channel in the body which conducts the dynamic pranic force manifesting as prana shakti from the right side of mooladhara chakra, criss-crossing the spine through the major chakras to the right side of ajna chakra; associated with the mundane realm of experience and externalized awareness; also called surya nadi as the solar energy flows through it.

Pooja – worship.

Pradipika – self-illuminating; that which illumines.

Prakriti – nature; manifested shakti; manifest and unmanifest nature composed of the three gunas; counterpart of purusha in Samkhya philosophy.

Prana – vital energy force sustaining life and creation, permeating the whole of creation and existing in both the macrocosmos and microcosmos.

Prana tattwa – element representing the vital or life-giving force.

Prana vayu – pranic air current; also refers to a specific current, one of the pancha pranas or vayus, centralized in the thoracic region, from the throat to the diaphragm, responsible for processes of inspiration and absorption.

Prana vidya – knowledge and control of prana; a healing technique involving awareness and movement of prana.

Pranamaya kosha – energy sheath, or vital pranic body; the sheath covering the self which is composed of pranic vibration and the rhythm of pranic forces.

Pranayama – a series of techniques using the breath to control the flow of prana within the body.

Pranotthana – awakening of the pranas in the different nadis and chakras; a stage of awakening preparatory to kundalini awakening.

Pratyahara – restraining the sensory and motor organs; withdrawal and emancipation of the mind from the domination of the senses and sensual objects; training the senses to follow the mind within; fifth stage of ashtanga yoga described by Sage Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras*.

Pratyaksha – the sixth limb of Sage Gheranda's saptanga yoga; inner perception; inner acceptance; present before the eyes, visible, perceptible, clear.

Pravritti marga – the path of extroversion, engaging in modification of consciousness (vrittis).

Puranas – eighteen ancient texts containing the earliest mythology of the tantric and vedic traditions, consisting of legends and mythological narrations dealing with creation, recreation and the genealogies of sages and rulers.

Purusha – literally, 'the one who lives in the city (of the body)'; the soul; pure consciousness according to Samkhya philosophy, undefiled and unlimited by contact with prakriti or matter; can also refer to a man or human being.

Purushartha – human attainment; the four basic needs or desires to be fulfilled in life, viz. artha (wealth), kama (love), dharma (duty), moksha (liberation).

Raja yoga – the supreme yoga; union through control of the mental processes and concentration of mind; the most authoritative text is Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* which contain ashtanga yoga, the eightfold path.

Rajas – one of the three gunas or attributes; dynamism; state of activity; creativity combined with full ego involvement.

Rajasic – pertaining to rajas.

Rishi – seer; realized sage; one who contemplates or meditates on the Self.

Sadhaka – one who practises sadhana; a spiritual aspirant.

Sadhana – spiritual practice or discipline performed regularly.

Sahajoli mudra – practice of vajroli by a woman, involving contraction of the lower urinary muscles for the stimulation of swadhisthana chakra.

Sahasrara chakra – ‘thousand-petalled lotus;’ abode of Shiva or superconsciousness; highest chakra or psychic centre, it symbolizes the threshold between the psychic and spiritual realms and is located at the crown of the head.

Samadhi – the culmination of meditation, state of oneness of mind with the object of concentration and the universal consciousness; self-realization; the eighth stage of raja yoga.

Samana vayu – one of the five pancha pranas or vayus, it is located between the navel and the diaphragm; it flows from side to side and controls the digestion.

Samhita – collection of mantras and rules; texts on yoga; vedic texts.

Samsara – illusory world, the course or circuit of worldly life; unending cycle of birth and death.

Samskara – mental impression stored in the subtle body as an archetype; the impressions which condition one’s nature, causing one to react or respond in a certain way.

Samyama – restraint, self-discipline; harmonious control of concentration (dharana), meditation (dhyana) and samadhi fused into one process.

Sankalpa – positive resolve; purpose, aim, intention; will-power.

Samkhya – one of the six systems of Indian philosophy; attributed to Sage Kapila, Samkhya is a spiritual science based on the division of all existence into the two eternal principles of purusha and prakriti, and the twenty-three elements of creation; the philosophical basis of the yoga system.

- Sannyasin** – one who has taken sannyasa initiation, surrendering everything to the guru and the spiritual journey.
- Sanskrit** – language of the vedic civilization, still used in India and the yogic culture.
- Sanskriti** – culture; social environment conducive for total evolution of individuals and especially their spiritual development.
- Santosha** – contentment in any situation; one of the niyamas (observances) of the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali.
- Saptanga yoga** – the seven limbs of yoga described by Sage Gheranda in *Gheranda Samita*, viz. purification, firmness, steadiness, patience, lightness, inner perception and non-involvement.
- Sarvangasana** – shoulder stand pose; an inverted posture.
- Satsang** – gathering in which the ideals and principles of truth are discussed; spiritual association; association with the wise and the good.
- Sat sankalpa** – true resolve, pure will.
- Sattwa** – one of the three gunas, or attributes of nature; state of luminosity, harmony, equilibrium and purity.
- Sattwic** – pertaining to sattwa.
- Satyam** – truth; speaking the truth; being truthful to oneself; honesty.
- Shakti** – primal energy; manifest consciousness; power, ability, capacity, strength, energy; counterpart of Shiva; the moving power of nature and consciousness; in Hindu mythology Shakti is often symbolized as a divine woman.
- Shakti chalini mudra** – a mudra in which energy is moved through pranayama combined with bandha and nauli.
- Shalabhasana** – the locust pose; a backward bend.
- Shambhavi mudra** – eyebrow centre gazing; psychic attitude focused on Shiva (Supreme Consciousness).
- Shankhaprakshalana** – literally ‘cleaning the conch’; a cleansing technique (shatkarma) of hatha yoga that uses saline water to clean the stomach (which is shaped like a conch) and the small and large intestines.
- Sharirik** – physical.

Shastra – an authoritative treatise on any subject, particularly science and religion; sacred book.

Shatkarma – the six hatha yoga techniques of purification: neti, dhauti, basti, nauli, kapalbhati and trataka.

Shaucha – cleanliness.

Shavasana – the corpse pose; a classical relaxation posture.

Shiva – state of pure consciousness, individual and cosmic, original source of yoga; Lord of yogis; auspicious, benevolent one; name of the god of the Hindu trinity who is entrusted with the work of destruction; destroyer of the ego and duality.

Shiva Samhita – Sanskrit text enumerating the concepts and principles essential to the practice of yoga; classical text on hatha yoga.

Shodhanam – first limb of Sage Gheranda's saptanga yoga; purification.

Shoonya – void, state of transcendental consciousness; space behind the eyebrow centre.

Shravana – to listen, to hear the scriptures; the second of the three steps on the path of knowledge in vedantic sadhana.

Shuddhi – purification, purity.

Siddha – an adept or perfected person; one who has developed his/her psychic and pranic capacity to the point of mastery.

Siddhanta vakya – the final statements of truth; words of the scriptures.

Siddhasana – accomplished pose; cross-legged meditation posture.

Siddhi – perfection; enhanced pranic and psychic capacity; paranormal or supernormal accomplishment; control of mind and prana; eight supernatural powers obtained by yogis as a result of long practice.

Sloka – verse.

Sirshasana – headstand pose.

Soma – name of a plant that was the most important ingredient in ancient sacrificial offerings; juice of a potent

plant drunk during religious ceremonies to experience divine intoxication; nectar of the gods (amrita).

Sthairyam – the third limb of Sage Gheranda's saptanga yoga; steadiness.

Sthoola prana – one of the pancha pranas or vayus; located between the diaphragm and the larynx; it flows upward; controls the heart and the lungs; also called prana vayu.

Surya bheda pranayama – a vitality stimulating breathing technique; pranayama in which inhalation activates pingala nadi.

Surya namaskara – salutations to the sun; a dynamic series of twelve postures.

Sushumna – central energy flow (nadi) in the spine; it conducts the kundalini or spiritual force from mooladhara chakra to sahasrara chakra; the main energy flow related to transcendental awareness; situated in the spinal cord of the human body, opens when balance is achieved between ida and pingala nadis.

Swadhisthana chakra – literally, 'one's own abode'; second psychic/pranic centre; located in the coccyx, associated with the sacral plexus and governing the urogenital system; the storehouse of subconscious impressions.

Tadasana – palm tree pose; a standing asana in which the body is stretched upward.

Tamas – one of the three gunas or attributes of nature; inertia, stability; ignorance, darkness; unwillingness to change.

Tamasic – pertaining to tamas.

Tantra – most ancient universal science and culture which deals with the transition of human nature from the present level of evolution and understanding to a transcendental level of knowledge, experience and awareness; a particular path of sadhana including mantra, yantra and other esoteric practices.

Tantrikas – those who practise tantra.

Tapas – austerity; a specific type of pain and hardship; this pain is of three types: *adhyatmika*, spiritual, *adhidevika*, natural or environmental, and *adhibhautika*, physical.

Tattwa – ‘that-ness’; true essential nature; an element, a primary substance; another name for mahabhoota.

Tiryaka tadasana – swaying palm tree pose; a side bending asana.

Trataka – one of the shatkarmas; a technique of gazing steadfastly upon an object such as a candle flame, black dot or yantra with unblinking eyes.

Udana vayu – one of the pancha pranas or vayus, it is located in the extremities of the body: arms, legs and head; it flows with a spiraling motion and rises up the throat entering the head; it controls the sensory and motor organs.

Uddiyana bandha – abdominal retraction lock; drawing in of the abdomen towards the backbone after exhaling.

Ujjayi pranayama – a subtle pranayama often used during meditation; the psychic breath.

Unmani – mindless; beyond the mind.

Upanishads – the philosophical portion of the Vedas, traditionally one hundred and eight in number, containing intimate dialogues and discussions between guru and disciple on the nature of the Absolute and the path leading towards it; literally ‘to sit near and listen’ (to the spiritual teacher); regarded as the source of Vedanta, Yoga and Samkhya philosophies.

Vachik – vocal; verbal.

Vairagya – non-attachment; absence of sensual craving and desires; detachment; supreme dispassion.

Vaishnava – the sect that reveres incarnations of Vishnu as the Supreme Reality.

Vajrasana – thunderbolt pose; a kneeling meditative posture.

Vajroli mudra – contraction and release of the male urinary passage to stimulate swadhisthana chakra and promote brahmacharya; controlling the emissions during sexual intercourse according to hatha yoga texts.

Vasishtha, Sage – a celebrated rishi and seer of the Vedas; author of many vedic hymns. His teachings are recorded in *Yoga Vasishtha*, one of the greatest expositions of jnana yoga.

Vayu – wind, air; life breath or vital air; prana.

Vedanta – one of the six principle systems of Indian philosophy; literally ‘ the last part of the Vedas’; the school of Hindu thought based primarily on the Upanishads; the doctrine of non-dualism (Advaita).

Vedantin – one who follows the philosophy of Vedanta.

Vedas – ancient texts revealed to the sages and saints of India, explaining and regulating every aspect of life from Supreme Reality to worldly affairs; four in number: Rig, Yajur, Sama, Atharva, which are further divided into the Samhita, Brahmana, Aranyaka and Upanishads; the oldest books in the library of mankind, parts of them revealed to sages and seers before 5000 BC.

Veerya – semen; strength; courage; energy.

Vibhooti – sacred ash; supernatural power.

Vidya – knowledge or science, particularly knowledge of spiritual truth and non-mundane reality.

Vijnana – intuitive ability of mind; essential knowledge, wisdom; the principle of pure intelligence; understanding; discrimination, discernment; a science.

Vijnanamaya kosha – astral or psychic (higher mental) sheath or body; one of the sheaths of the soul, consisting of the principle of intellect or buddhi, the subtler level of our own existence with its vision, intuition, wisdom and power of understanding; the covering of the self which is made of knowledge.

Vipareeta karani asana – inverted pose, also known as the half-shoulder stand pose.

Vipareeta karani mudra – inverted psychic attitude; a postural mudra performed while in vipareeta karani asana.

Vishnu – vedic deity; the second deity of the Hindu trinity (Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva), entrusted with the preservation of the universe, a duty which obliges him to appear in several incarnations; Supreme Consciousness.

Vyaghrasana – the tiger pose; a dynamic yogic posture.

Vyana vayu – one of the pancha pranas or vayus; the reserve of pranic energy pervading the entire body.

Yama – self-restraints or rules of conduct which render the mind tranquil; first stage of the eight limbs of yoga (ashtanga yoga) of Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*.

Yantra – a geometric symbol of cosmic power designed to unleash the hidden potential energy and consciousness; used in meditation and concentration practices.

Yoga – union; the root is yuj, meaning 'to join', 'to yoke'; a system of practice leading to a state of union between the individual and universal awareness; practices, philosophy and lifestyle to achieve peace, power and spiritual wisdom as well as perfect health, a sound mind and a balanced personality; one of the six main systems of Indian philosophy.

Yoga nidra – psychic sleep; practice in which the body sleeps while the mind remains aware as its movements are guided and quietened by instructions, inducing deep relaxation of body, mind and emotions.

Yoga Upanishads – a group of approximately twenty-two Upanishads more specifically concerned with yoga.

Yoga Vasishtha – a monumental scripture on Vedanta in the form of a dialogue between Sri Rama and his guru Sage Vasishtha.

Yoni – womb; source.

Yoni mudra – attitude of the womb or source; a hand mudra; also another name for shanmuki mudra.

General Index

- Ahimsa 232, 242
Ajna chakra, see chakra
Amrit, see nectar
Anahata chakra, see chakra
Anandamaya kosha, see kosha
Annamaya kosha, see kosha
Apana vayu, see vayu
Asana 1, 4, 17–18, 19–20, 24,
30, 34–35, 41, 52, 62, 84,
106, 108–109, 119–120,
125–130, 144, 152–154,
189–193, 202, 223–224;
kati chakrasana 185;
matsyendrasana 37;
padmasana 159;
siddhasana 159;
tadasana 185;
tiryaka tadasana 185;
vipareeta karani asana 168
Atma, see soul
Bandha 5, 19, 22, 62, 103,
107, 116–118, 159, 191, 194;
jalandhara bandha 113, 141,
167–168;
moola bandha 113, 141,
165, 167–168;
uddiyana bandha 113, 141,
167–168
Bhakti 21, 76, 137, 139, 141
Bhakti yoga 4, 51–52, 57,
124–128, 131–139, 143, 184
Brahmacharya 64–65, 137,
152, 218
Brahman 233
Buddha 45, 148
Buddhism 70–71
Chakra 69–70, 73–74, 78–83,
90–92, 98–99;
ajna chakra 8, 9, 59–60, 62,
77, 79, 93, 98, 113, 121,
122, 147, 150, 163, 164;
anahata chakra 81, 99;
manipura chakra 71, 74, 94,
116, 225;
mooladhara chakra 9, 61,
70–71, 78, 81, 94, 98, 112,
115, 147, 161, 164, 169;
sahasrara chakra 9, 10, 60, 61,
68, 77, 79, 81, 83, 86, 112,
138, 150, 162–163, 169;
swadhisthanachakra 71, 94, 99;
vishuddhichakra 80, 93, 94, 99

- China 71–74
 Christ 44, 74–77, 83, 180
 Christianity 75–82, 121
- Desikacharya 50
 Dharana 21, 126, 141, 223
 Dhyana 19, 21, 71, 126, 141, 193, 223
 Diet 120, 139, 157, 186, 195–196, 206–216, 218
- Egypt 68–69, 85
 Element 30–31, 157, 160
- Fasting 202, 215–216
- God 1, 21, 59, 78, 128, 143, 182, 193, 217, 220, 221, 237–239
 Gorakhnath, Yogi 37–38, 45–46, 52, 99, 178
 Greece 69–70
 Guna, rajas 23, 132–133, 168, 206–208, 236; sattwa 23, 132–133, 206–208, 236; tamas 23, 132–133, 206–208, 236, 238
 Guru 2–3, 5, 36–38, 41–42, 44, 48, 138, 162–165, 171–172, 176–178, 180, 218, 228–229
- Ida nadi, see nadi
 Islam 82–83
 Iyengar, B.K.S. 50
- Jnana yoga 4, 51–52, 58, 123–138, 184
 Judaism 74–81
- Karma 14, 119, 134, 135, 234
- Karma yoga 4, 51–52, 57, 120, 124–127, 131–138, 144, 184
 Kirlian photography 74, 106
 Kosha 19, 87–90, 90, 168–169; anandamaya kosha 87–90, 90; annamaya kosha 87–90, 90; manomaya kosha 87–90, 90; pranamaya kosha 86–122, 155; vijñanamaya kosha 87–90, 90
- Krishna 112
 Krishnamacharya, T. 50
 Kriya yoga 50–51, 78–79, 85, 91–92, 127–128, 131–138, 140, 161–163, 165, 167–170
 Kundalini 9–10, 17–18, 23, 43, 61, 66–67, 84–85, 86, 90, 92, 94, 109, 110, 115–122, 161–165, 227
 Kundalini yoga 51–52, 57, 90–92, 131–138, 161–167
- Laya 149, 157–158
 Laya yoga 123, 142, 157–161
- Manipura chakra, see chakra
 Manomaya kosha, see kosha
 Matsyendranath, Yogi 37–38, 45, 46, 52
 Meditation 18, 19, 54, 84, 130, 140, 144, 150, 154, 157, 159, 193, 201, 206
 Mind 28–30, 101–103, 127–128, 141–142, 142, 149
 Mooladhara chakra, see chakra
 Mudra 4, 12, 19, 22, 62–65, 103, 107, 159, 191–192, 194; khechari mudra 63–64, 80, 156–157, 165, 168; sahajoli mudra 64;

- shambhavi mudra 122, 157;
vajroli mudra 64–65, 165;
vipareeta karani mudra 168
- Nadi 9, 31, 33, 61, 66–67,
72–74, 86, 92–93, 98, 108,
150; ida nadi 8–10, 92–93,
100–101, 150, 227; pingala
nadi 8–10, 92–93, 100–101,
150, 156, 227; sushumna
nadi 9, 92–93, 114–122, 142,
167, 169
- Nath sect 37, 38
- Nectar 63–64, 80
- Niyama 46–47, 132, 141, 148,
151–152, 152, 173, 202–203,
223, 231
- Pingala nadi, see nadi
- Prana 8–10, 12, 29–31, 33–34,
43, 59–63, 70–74, 76–78,
86–122, 141–142, 145–148,
149, 155–156, 161–162, 173,
191–193, 212, 215–216, 225
- Pranamaya kosha, see kosha
- Prana vayu, see vayu
- Pranayama 19, 61, 62, 71,
76, 97–98, 103, 106–107,
108–109, 111, 116–118, 128,
132, 144, 147, 153–162, 165,
189–193, 196–197, 205, 213,
223–224, 230;
bhrumari 185;
kapalbhati 155;
nadi shodhana 185;
ujjayi pranayama 168;
- Pratyahara 19, 107, 132, 141,
192, 223
- Purification 28–29, 47, 61,
99–100, 102–103, 108–111,
115–117, 120, 152, 173–175
- Purushartha, see self-effort
- Rajas, rajasic, see guna
- Raja yoga 4, 12, 18, 29, 36, 44,
45, 51, 112, 123–128, 135,
136–137, 144, 145–157, 166,
167, 168, 172, 223, 231
- Sadhaka 132, 138–139, 163,
171, 179, 198–202, 217–242
- Sadhana 2, 4–5, 12–13, 24–27,
29–30, 48–49, 76, 129–131,
133, 134, 171–216, 218–221,
222, 226–230
- Sahasrara chakra, see chakra
- Samadhi 7, 21, 47, 64, 137–
138, 142, 146, 149–150,
157–161, 193, 226
- Samana vayu, see vayu
- Samkhyā 58
- Samskara 15, 119, 233
- Sannyasin 48–50, 121
- Santosha 237
- Sattwa, sattwic, see guna
- Self-effort 14, 26–27, 182
- Self-realization 13–15, 18–19,
22, 49, 65–67, 124, 129–130,
141, 177, 181, 188, 190, 193,
194, 206, 220, 221, 227
- Shakti 10, 17–18, 27, 33,
62–63, 103, 122, 149, 159,
166–167
- Shatkarma 10, 61, 120, 126,
132, 148–149, 210;
basti 192;
dhauti 192;
kapalbhati 98;
nauli 113, 192;
trataka 98, 122, 157, 192

Shiva 10, 24, 36–37, 42,
 62–63, 103, 122, 136, 138
 Siddhi 22, 86, 110, 119–120,
 139, 172, 176, 178–181, 205,
 227
 Soul 14, 88, 95, 112, 143, 162,
 178–181, 201, 209–210
 Sushumna nadi, see nadi
 Swadhisthana chakra, see chakra

 Tamas, tamasic, see guna
 Tantra 45–46, 57–67, 71, 76,
 80, 161, 165–168, 182, 229,
 233–234
 Tapaha 236, 240
 Tattwa, see element
 Transcendental Meditation 54

 Udana vayu, see vayu
 Upanishads 39, 44

 Vayu 43, 111; apana vayu 7,
 86, 93–95, 95, 112–114, 139,
 167; prana vayu 7, 86, 93,
 112–114, 139, 167; samana
 vayu 93, 94; udana vayu
 94–95; vyana vayu 94–95
 Vedas 43, 80, 182, 239
 Vijnanamaya kosha, see kosha
 Vishnu 51
 Vishuddhi chakra, see chakra
 Vivekananda, Swami 49
 Vyana vayu, see vayu

 Yama 46–47, 132, 141, 148,
 151–152, 152, 173, 223,
 231–236
 Yogananda, Paramahansa 49

Notes

Notes



Conversations on the Science of Yoga is an encyclopaedic series presenting the vast, timeless culture of yoga topic by topic through the voice of three generations of masters – Swami Sivananda Saraswati, Swami Satyananda Saraswati and Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati. The teachings are given in question and answer format with the inclusion of verses from the scriptures, connecting the modern experience with the classical tradition.

Hatha Yoga Book I: An Overview introduces the vast field of hatha yoga, laying a foundation for understanding the more specific aspects addressed in subsequent books. It clearly presents hatha yoga as a profound and holistic science for purification of the physical and energy bodies with the purpose of managing the mind and experiencing higher states of consciousness. Included are: the origins and history of hatha yoga; hatha yoga in other cultures; an understanding of the pranic or energy body; the role of hatha yoga in other branches of yoga; and guidelines for hatha yoga practice and lifestyle.

Through the wisdom of these masters, a complete understanding of hatha yoga and a vision for its application in the modern era is interpreted for yoga aspirants around the world.



[bar code here]

ISBN : 978-93-81620-27-4